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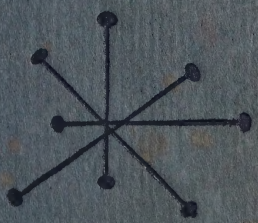

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Supervision—
New Patterns and Processes

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MARGARET WILLIAMSON

Supervision—

NEW PATTERNS AND PROCESSES

ASSOCIATION PRESS New York

SUPERVISION—NEW PATTERNS AND PROCESSES

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Association Press, 291 Broadway, New York 7, N. Y.

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Library of Congress catalog card number: 61-7106

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Printed in the United States of America

Author's Preface

Because of some deliberate changes in approach, and in view of the nature of new material to be introduced, this book is not presented as a revision of an earlier text, *Supervision—Principles and Methods* (1950), now out of print. The author has felt free, however, to use material from the earlier book when it has seemed appropriate.

The chief focus remains on the practice of supervision in those agencies which make primary use of group methods in their program of services to people. Supervision as a process in social work has developed in close relationship to the practice of social casework, and group work's debt to this older established area of practice for basic formulations and insights is very great. It is the author's belief that there is need, now, for more concentrated attention to the implications for supervision in the group service agency, of those aspects of its own practice setting which are distinctive and different.

The book is written at a time when, in the development of social work processes and methods, none are under-

going sharper scrutiny than those related to worker supervision. One question rising to the surface of the ferment is whether in supervision in social work we have been nurturing a process that tends, too readily, to develop worker conformity and dependency. It is the writer's conviction that when practiced as an art in a setting that allows for full and free play of social work's most basic and most pervasive method—the creative use of relationship for socially desirable ends—it can and does lead, rather, to release of worker individuality, encouragement of initiative and the inquiring approach, and to the fostering of independent functioning and individual assumption of leadership. Achievements, in these respects, must rest very largely with the stature of those undertaking its practice, for in the quality of their performance lies either threat to or hope for realization of its deepest potentialities.

A closely related question, undergoing current discussion, has to do with the purpose and functions of supervision; the query is whether combining administrative responsibility with that of teaching, in a single supervisory job, serves to inhibit rather than encourage freedom in the teaching-learning process. The point of view, expressed in this book, is that these functions are inextricably interrelated in the supervisory process, and that the content of learning through supervision must include, integrally, essential learnings, for direct use in practice, of the worker's responsibilities in relation to the purposes, policies, and administrative procedures through which the agency that employs him holds itself accountable for its services to its clientele and its community.

These and other related questions, calling for exploration, certainly add zest and challenge, today, to the supervisory job in the group service agency. There is little

likelihood of its becoming dull to the thoughtful supervisor, who is also currently involved with emerging questions having to do with differentiation in services and deployment of personnel.

Owing partly to the continued serious shortage of professionally trained personnel, partly to agency policy and established ways of work, the number of such workers in direct practice with groups is extremely limited. This holds true at a time when, on the one hand, serious community situations clearly demand the institution of some group services that will necessitate the employment of professionally trained group workers and, on the other, there is a rising sense of urgency that the group service agency sustain its pioneering role in the development of group work theory and practice through more direct exploration and experimentation in the use of the group process by trained personnel working directly with various types of groups.

Close contact through the years with increasing numbers of dedicated and professionally skillful supervisors in the group service agencies gives the writer assurance of the quality of leadership they bring to these considerations and a persistent optimism about the outcome if they are freed to exercise it.

It is with a deep sense of gratitude for continued stimulus and enlightenment received from these men and women, as well as from successive classes of graduate students she has been privileged to know and work with at the New York School of Social Work and at institutes elsewhere, that the author dedicates, to them, these further thoughts about supervision, as she, herself, moves out of the ranks of the professionally employed.

MARGARET WILLIAMSON

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CHAPTER 1

The Group Service Agency Setting

THE CONSIDERATION OF WORKER SUPERVISION IN this text is directed primarily to a field of practice which, though without subscription to one generally accepted name, operates in a group of agencies with important identifiable likenesses.

Such characterizing terms as "informal education," "leisure time," "education-recreation," "youth serving," "group serving," and "group service" are variously used in speaking of this field of practice. The writer admits a bias in favor of "group service agencies" as an over-all term and adopts it for reference throughout the text.

The term is taken to embrace such agencies as the following: Settlements, YMCA's and YWCA's, Jewish Community Centers, B'nai B'rith youth groups and Catholic Youth Organizations, Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts, Camp Fire Girls and Boys' and Girls' Clubs, community centers, and professionally staffed church centers for week-day group activities. These agencies operate, chiefly, under voluntary auspices.

Many of the agencies mentioned can be described as multifunctional in their approach to meeting community needs; it is not unusual, for example, to find within the program of some of them, such direct services to individuals as food and housing and, in several instances, specialized casework services. Basic concepts, principles, and methods dealt with will have general application to the supervision of all personnel employed by a given agency, but the focus of concern is on the supervision and in-service training of the workers whose major responsibilities lie within the primary and predominant function of the agency, that in which the unit of service is the group.

There is an intent, here, to particularize a field of practice in a group of agencies where, it is believed, the setting —in terms of commonness of general objectives and function, similarity in the nature of services, general likeness in the worker-clientele constellation through which services are chiefly given, and in the methods used—will influence the objectives for worker supervision and various aspects of its practice.

We are all aware of the steadily increasing introduction of services to and through groups in agencies where the primary unit of service is the individual: for example, in family and child welfare agencies, in hospitals and other residential treatment institutions. The material developed in this text should be readily applicable to the supervision

of workers assigned to the direct guidance of groups in such settings, but the settings, themselves, will not receive focused attention. The practice of supervision in group service agencies, such as those identified earlier, remains the central concern and any descriptive material introduced will usually be drawn from and directed to the supervision of workers in their type of setting and related to their characteristic patterns of work with groups.

What in the group service agency setting can be expected to influence its supervisory objectives and practices?

The term "setting," usually taken to connote the major purpose, function, organizational structure, and program arrangements of an agency, is being construed to include, in addition, the nature of the relationships and the primary methods used by its workers in providing the services.

It is this writer's belief that in discussion, teaching, and writing about worker supervision in the group service agencies, too little attention has been paid to the inevitable impact on its processes of these "setting" factors as they pertain specifically and peculiarly to this type of agency. Without this kind of focused consideration, there has been a tendency, associated usually with eagerness to professionalize the processes themselves, to adopt, without sufficient examination as to their precise relevance or applicability, methods and, indeed, a kind of content of supervision, that have been conceived within and developed for use in casework agencies where setting, nature of service, and manner in which it is given, differ appreciably from those within which group services are offered.

Further thinking in this area has been stimulated by collaboration, in teaching, with the author's colleague, Irving Miller, of the faculty of the New York School of

Social Work. A recent article by Mr. Miller [1] presents, with provocative comment, some of the salient points of his analysis of the situation.

It is this writer's belief that although adhering staunchly to basic concepts of over-all purpose and needed quality of relationship which should infuse worker supervision in any setting, there is need, if supervision in the group service agency is to be strengthened, to forge out some of its subprocesses with more direct reference to characteristic aspects of the setting in which they will be used.

The most significant "aspects" of setting, in terms of their direct influence on supervisory practice seem, to the writer, to include: agency purpose and function; its program arrangements; client motivation in approaching the agency; staffing; worker-clientele relationships, and the methods by which services are given.

Agency Purpose and Function

Group service agencies, many of them with a history of service in this country that antedates the development of professionally conceived processes and method in social work, generally see their purpose as strongly educational in nature. Whatever the precise wording of their statements of purpose, there emerges, clearly, a common intent to be concerned with preparation for socially responsible citizenship and with educational means for increasing understanding and acceptance of constructive values and socially acceptable modes of behavior. Worker guided group experience is consciously geared both to the development of the member's capacity to relate positively to others and to the broadening of his outlook and expansion

[1] Irving Miller, "Distinctive Characteristics of Supervision in Group Work," *Social Work,* Vol. 5, No. 1 (January, 1960), p. 69.

of his world through new, exciting, and educationally stimulating group activities.

That the professional development of group work as a process and method has been strongly influenced by this traditional educational approach of the established agencies, is evident in its generally accepted statements of purpose, in its envisioning of major area of program content, and in primary aspects of the methodology prescribed for the giving of service and achievement of objectives.

Further, the educational objectives and programs of most of these agencies are firmly rooted in and become the outward expression of the agency's announced commitment to certain identified cultural, religious, or ethical values.

These values become the dynamic, not only for the educational direction and nature of program activities but for the continuing evolvement of these agencies as national and, in some cases, international movements, with a concept of membership as a fellowship committed to the agency's system of beliefs.

The total program of the group service agency, then, to be understood, must be seen as two-pronged in aim: it is directed toward the achievement of purposes basic to its own particular philosophy and, at the same time, to the provision, in common with other agencies, of group and individual services to meet a wide variety of individual and community need, not in themselves regarded as peculiar to a particular agency's membership or program.

It follows, in the interest of safeguarding the integrity of the whole and maintaining the indigenousness of its parts, that the supervisory approach and techniques to be developed within these settings cannot ignore and must, indeed, respond to the tugging of this rootage. They should consciously, and in primary fashion, reflect the agency's philosophy and the educationally conceived purposes, program

content, and methods long associated with the giving of their group services.

There will be further consideration of the application of this principle to various aspects of the supervisory process at appropriate points in the development of the subject matter of this text.

Program Arrangements for the Giving of Service

A strain of logic behind the otherwise inadequate descriptive term "leisure-time agencies" lies in the fact that characteristically and perforce, their group services are provided to take place in the nonsleeping, nonschool and nonworking hours of the prospective clientele. Needs associated with this fact, brought into relationship with agency educational and developmental aims, have resulted in a program with a strong recreational coloration. This characteristic aspect of the service must be seen as an important element in the orientation of workers and as helping to determine a large component in the content and methods of worker in-service training through supervision. This point will be further developed as it becomes pertinent in succeeding chapters.

Client Motivation in Approaching the Agency

Factors of agency purpose and function, together with the established program arrangements for the giving of service, generate a highly voluntary approach to the group service agency on the part of its clientele. Whether in response to agency recruiting efforts, the good word of already participating members, or strong self-propulsion to seek recreational and educational opportunities that will also provide for companionship in an age peer group, the approach of an individual would-be participant is usually self-initiated and free flowing: he frequently comes to the

agency in company of an already established natural group of similarly motivated peers.

Though group service agencies generally hold themselves ready, after due process at intake, to accept individual referrals for group membership, from agencies giving casework or other highly individualized services, or from other interested groups or individuals in the community, the approach to group membership through referral is the exception rather than the rule in these agencies.

Unlike the client moving toward the agency giving casework service, the individual seeking membership in a group service agency comes, not with a presupposed or self-identified personal problem, but, rather, with needs that he holds very much in common with his fellow members; in other words, he is to be understood first, in the group service agency, not in terms of a deep personal problem that sets him apart—makes him different from others, but rather in terms of his essential *likeness* to others in his present interests and needs as well as in factors of age and other characteristics of his immediate population grouping.

The opportunities and values he seeks through group activity and experience are those largely unachievable in solitariness. The group is sought—if inarticulately—for values of togetherness, sense of status in belonging, opportunities to share in wanted new experience and to "do things and go places" that promise excitement and fulfillment within the protection and comfortableness of peer companionship.

That the group member frequently brings with him acute personal problems that may affect his individual use of the group experience is recognized by the trained group worker. These personal problems are not usually, however, in the forefront of the group member's own thinking

as a major reason for approaching the group service agency; his group related needs are well out in front.

Obviously the personal problems of individual members, as they are revealed in group activities and relationships, call for competent diagnosis by professional staff, and such activity on the part of the immediately related worker to relieve their pressure, as is appropriate within the context of the group setting. A primary focus will always be on so guiding the group process that the member's experience within the group will, in itself, give needed support and contribute, if that is possible, to the dissipation of some of the root causes of the problem or to the strengthening of the individual's ability to cope with it constructively himself.

Where the individual problem is largely beyond the reach or capacity of guided group experience to ameliorate, and the group service agency, itself, does not provide professional casework service, referral to an agency equipped to give the needed highly specialized and individualized service is indicated.

The nature of the motivations, as well as the strong element of initiative of clientele in approaching the group service agency should be carefully studied for their implications for group-serving practices and, by the same token, for the objectives, teaching content, and methods of supervision of the workers giving the service.

Staffing in the Group Service Agency

A sense of urgency to promote their own educational and value infused purposes, as well as their response to community demands for their educational and recreational services, has brought about a characteristically strong outreach on the part of these agencies to serve ever-increasing numbers in the population.

To accomplish these interrelated ends, they develop and have steadily maintained a system for using the services of large numbers of volunteer and/or part-time paid group leaders. The number of full-time salaried staff is relatively small and, although the number of trained staff now working directly with groups of the clientele is increasing, a much larger number take jobs in which there is little of this direct service to groups and a correspondingly heavy administrative component.

Along with responsibility for determining needs and directing services, full-time staff members are generally charged with responsibility for recruiting, selecting, training, and supervising the volunteer and other part-time workers whose efforts make possible such a large part of the agencies' direct services.

These workers present widely divergent backgrounds in education, experience, and motivation; thousands of these workers—many of them very young—come to the agency without particular training or experience, and at the outset, in almost every instance, without knowledge of the principles and ways of working with groups commonly observed and utilized by the group service agency.

Desire to be of service, combined, here and there, with a perfectly respectable need to earn money or gain experience for the pursuit of other individual educational goals, ranks high in the motivation of these workers. Of infinite importance, however, in any consideration of the supervisory process to be established to help them on the job, is the fact that with rare exceptions, they do not approach the job with a primary interest in group work in terms of a professional career; career interests, where they exist, are usually lodged elsewhere, and work in the group service agency is as strongly avocational as the relatively limited time spent at it would suggest.

An obvious implication is that except in the supervision of full-time staff, the notion of supervision as primarily a means for helping in the development of professional attitudes and competency to the end of assuring *professional* standards of work in the agency, must undergo some modification.

In the nature of the case, both the purposes of the group service agencies and the immediate work related needs of their thousands of volunteer and other part-time workers, call for a strong instructional component in their supervision; the focus of the supervisory process, in this instance, should, as Mr. Miller's article [2] suggests, give "active supportive direction to actual work in groups—giving service, developing program and program skills, etc."

A further implication for the supervision of volunteer and part-time workers emerges in relation to the assigning of leaders to groups or vice versa. Acceptance of the validity of providing differing types of service to groups and a sound differential approach to determining agency objectives for given groups will be imperative if a true matching process of worker and group is to be achieved, and many workers, their supervisors, and many groups in their care are to be safeguarded from the frustrating experience of trying to meet wholly unrealistic expectations.

Criteria for assessing group movement and worker productivity must be forged out for different levels and content of service, and the supervision of an individual worker developed in relation to the precise requirements of the particular group service job to which he has been assigned; only so can any process of worker evaluation be said to be honest and respecting of persons.

More detailed consideration will be given to these and

[2] *Ibid.*

other aspects of the staffing situation at various points in succeeding chapters.

Worker-Client Relationships and Methods by Which Services Are Given

As stated earlier, the worker-client relationship in the group service agency and the primary methods by which services are given are considered as aspects of the setting whose influence on supervisory practice merits more careful examination than it appears, hitherto, to have received.

In her Introduction to *Supervision in Social Casework,*[3] Virginia Robinson speaks of supervision "as a unique teaching process *which has grown up inside of casework, indigenous to it* but different from it in important ways" (writer's italics). In the development of supervisory practice in group service agencies there is work to be done in identifying and making positive use of those factors in the immediate practice setting that are inherent to and expressive of its own nature—the "whats," "hows," and "what fors" that must influence all its related processes, including those of supervision, if they are to be truly indigenous.

Failing this, and with understandable respect for concepts and processes developed in an older and more professionally established field of practice, we may sometimes seek to transfer aspects of supervisory practice which, though indigenous to and of the essence of casework, may be without relevance in the practice setting in which group services are given.

The client seeking casework service does so under the impact of a serious personal problem and his feelings about it—matters that, at least temporarily, set him apart from his fellows. "Since it is reasonable to expect that the con-

[3] Virginia P. Robinson, *Supervision in Social Casework* (Chapel Hill, N. C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1936), p. xii.

tent and form of service will affect the content and form of its supervision," [4] it is not strange that casework has put special emphasis upon the intra-psychic elements in the supervisory relationships and the importance of developing psychological insight and self-awareness, primarily in the interest of an objective and insightful approach to people in trouble.

The "form and content" of group services in the agencies under consideration, cannot, however, be described in exactly these terms.

As suggested earlier, individuals approaching the group service agencies come without conscious preoccupation with personal problems that would set them apart, but rather with needs and interests they hold in common with peers—needs and interests that will largely depend, for their satisfaction, upon the individual's belonging to and becoming an active participant in a group of his peers.

This would suggest that the supervisor of both full-time staff and volunteer and other part-time workers, whether in individual conference or workers' group meeting, would assume a direct teaching approach to enlarging group leaders' understanding of factors of normal growth and development, of needs and interests characteristic of various age levels, and of what is involved, in terms of method and skill, in developing program activities appropriate to these needs and interests.

Obviously, worker self-awareness is a quality profoundly to be hoped for in any area of practice, but the worker's supervisor in the group service agency will need to be clear and realistic as to the precise aspects of the service setting that most call for its exercise as well as to the nature and extent of damage to services that its relative absence in a particular leader of a particular group might entail. It is

[4] Irving Miller, *op. cit.*, p. 71.

not a purpose of supervision, in any setting, to develop self-awareness and understanding for their own sake; a supervisor's preoccupation with the personality of the worker has, unfortunately, meant, too often, withholding from him needed help on the job—help which, in terms of resulting stimulus and satisfaction, might well have contributed creatively to his growth as a person.

A further point is that in its higher degree of visibility to the rest of the agency and, indeed, to the outside world, the worker-group relationship in the group service agency differs significantly from casework relationships and practice. The writer believes this difference has some implications for its supervisory processes.

For reasons having to do with the need for scrupulous maintenance of confidentiality in relation to a client situation as well as with the need to provide, for the interview, a climate that will facilitate the troubled client's verbal participation, the casework process is closely guarded from direct observation, and the client, himself, is generally not exposed to contact either with agency personnel, other than the worker assigned to his case, or with other clients approaching the agency; except in selected and carefully structured group situations, "other clients" are not considered his fellows, and the one-to-one approach of caseworker to client is predominant.

In contrast, the group member has a high degree of mobility in the group service agency; he and his fellows will know, and be known by agency personnel other than their assigned group leader; in particular they will usually be known by and have ready access to their group leader's supervisor. As self-engaged, voluntary, and relatively self-directing participants they will feel free to talk in and around the agency about what goes on in the group meet-

ings and to communicate both positive and negative reactions to their experience in the group.

Program activities, with their appurtenances, are also visible and accessible in the group service agency, and response to the pull of the interests they promise is normally to be expected in light of what is known about needs and concerns of clientele at various age levels. Strong motivation, impelled by these needs, together with accessibility of opportunity for satisfying them, induces a sense of identification with the agency and the assumption of a role of self-conscious consumer of its services. In agencies where membership, as an agency fellowship, is consciously promoted, this sense of identification with and right to speak out about agency services may be even more highly developed.

What are the implications for worker supervision of these factors in the practice setting? In the first place the supervisor will, in the nature of the case, have some opportunity for direct observation of aspects of group activity and of what goes on between worker and group; in his free and visible movement about the agency he will have other natural means of adding to this knowledge; it is all relatively open and patent. Need to protect confidentiality in relation to individual group member situations does not require the closing off of these channels that provide the supervisor with knowledge of the group, its multiple relationships, and its corporate doings; indeed, this knowledge may contribute in rich measure to his identification and understanding of member problems that may require individualized attention outside of the group's life together —problems that may call for direct activity on his part in response to self-referral by a member or to request for help in the situation from a worker. Work in these individualized situations would of course, be carried, whether alone,

or jointly with a group leader, with the strictest observance of the principle of confidentiality.

In relation, however, to the customary processes involved in group leadership in these agencies and the need to give help to the worker to increase his ability to give service of good quality in their setting, it is indicated that the supervisor, to come close to the situation, will, in most instances, not need to depend solely on the written record or verbalized comment in conference, of the worker working directly with the group.

This aspect of the practice situation, examined in conjunction with the established fact of the extensive use of young, untrained, and relatively inexperienced volunteer and part-time group leaders gives pause for thought and some question as to whether we do not need a completely new approach to worker recording requirements in the group service agency and to a needed identification of the purposes and uses of various types of records.

The full process record, a necessary educational tool for teacher and learner in the field work situation of a graduate school of social work, where the goal is mastery, in depth, of the group work process, situational analysis, understanding of group and individual behavior and of programing processes involved in diagnosis, assessment, and fulfillment of member needs, has no place in many of the worker-group situations characteristic of the agencies under consideration; to be wedded to it as a sort of end in itself or as some mysterious symbol of the "truly professional" is to be unrelated to reality and lacking in the creativity needed for the development and use of recording methods and forms more appropriate to general agency needs and more realistically geared to the abilities and readiness of most of its group leaders to sustain.

This is not to suggest that there would never be need

for process recording in the group service agency. It is a professional tool ready to the hand of the trained staff member assigned, through a process of careful planning to work at an identifiable professional level of practice with this or that group for the achievement of defined objectives unattainable without professional level competence.

Agency purposes, in such assignments, might be related to an over-all research framework or more commonly to a desire to give service commensurate in depth and quality with revealed pervasiveness of problem, deviant behavior, or extreme need in a particular group.

Recording in the group service agency, with particular reference to the use of records in supervision, will receive further consideration in a later chapter.

One further aspect of the practice setting in the group service agency that deserves examination for its implications for worker supervision has to do with the nature of its own central process, that is, the process of group guidance used by the agency assigned worker.

As suggested by Miss Robinson,[5] supervision in casework has developed in close relation to the nature of casework services and the essentials of its practice; this calls for constant orientation of its supervisory practices to helping workers deal creatively with people in trouble, characteristically on a one-to-one basis; this process must, in the nature of the case, result in content, and sometimes method of communication, in the casework supervisory conference, that in many ways will have less relevance to the characteristic responsibilities of the worker assigned to the guidance of group processes in the group service agency; though workers and supervisors in this newer field of practice are immeasurably indebted to the older and more established field for access to its insights and clear

[5] Virginia P. Robinson, *op. cit.*, p. xii.

enunciation of principles to be observed in any one-to-one relationship, including that of supervisor and worker, it should be seen that the content and methods of handling it in the group service agency supervisory situation must have primary reference to the nature of group service itself.

A further point to be emphasized here is, that just as supervisors and workers in group service agencies should be quick to acclaim their indebtedness, at many points, to casework as a field of practice, those who are thoroughly grounded in the use of group process should be better prepared than currently seems true, not only to adapt this knowledge and skill to creative use in the supervision and in-service training of all types of group service agency workers, but to further refine and enunciate its basic concepts and principles in ways to make it serviceable to other fields of practice.

Without quibble or question, it is distinctly not this writer's purpose to suggest the use, in supervision, of group processes in place of individual supervision, as typified in the supervisory conference; or even to give it priority rating as a method; there is no more justification for a supervisor's failure to individualize the workers he supervises than there is for a group leader's failure to individualize group members. The worker's right to expect that help in the doing of his particular job will be given individually, and in direct relation to his particular abilities and needs, is crucial. The two methods should be seen, rather, as mutually supportive, and calling for systematic planning to ensure the full contribution of each.

It is the writer's belief that full and adequate consideration of particular aspects of supervision in the group service agency, suggested in these pages, together with the immediate demands of the process itself, requires that supervision be seen as a professional function, to be as-

sumed only by a full-time staff member equipped for its demands by training and experience. It is believed, further, that the best preparation, in terms of its relatedness to characteristic situation and need, its prescribed body of knowledge and the opportunity for direct practice under supervision, is that provided in the two-year program of professional education in social work, with a concentration in group work. Specific courses in supervision can be found in many of these schools both within the two-year Master's-level curriculum or in postgraduation courses or institutes. The important consideration, however, is that any specific course training in supervision be built upon and integrated with basic content in social work education and in group work as one of its primary methods.

The demands of this particular area of professional functioning, whether for the supervision of full-time staff or of volunteer and part-time workers, lie far beyond the level of knowledge and capacity of the staff member entering the field without professional preparation and experience. It is with profound respect for "what it takes" that the writer presumes in succeeding chapters, to use her experience and knowledge to discuss basic principles and specifics of practice involved in the supervision of workers in the group service agency.

CHAPTER 2

Objectives and Functions of Supervision

To provide some pegs on which to hang the thoughts in this chapter about the objectives and functions of supervision in the group service agency, the following observations may serve as background:

> Supervision is a dynamic enabling process by which individual workers who have a direct responsibility for carrying out some part of the agency's program plans, are helped by a designated staff member to make the best use of their knowledge and skills, and to improve their abilities so that they do their jobs more effectively and with increasing satisfaction to themselves and to the agency.

The supervisor's responsibilities are both administrative and educative in nature; regularly scheduled consultation is considered a primary means. The focus of supervision will shift with the development and growing abilities of both worker and supervisor.

The ultimate objective of supervision is that through more effective effort on the part of its workers, an agency's services are improved in quality and its central purposes come nearer to fulfillment.

Objectives of Supervision

Pointing out that "the social climate of sponsored groups is largely determined by the administrative structure of the agency," Gertrude Wilson continues, "... it is the agency that sets the objective conditions under which groups operate; and the agency, as well as the members, brings pre-existing values and norms to the social situation within each group." [1] The "pre-existing values and norms" of the agency, growing out of its own origins and historical development, are articulated in its statements of purpose and function.

The workers it engages to provide its services will be continuously involved in a process of integrating, for use, and in terms of their demonstrable compatibility, the values inherent in the agency's purpose, the socially sanctioned values and "goods" sought by the community and by the clientele served, and the values and goals brought to any practice situation by the worker himself.

For the trained worker, these values and goals have been integrated and systematized at the very core of his program of social work education, for conscious reference and use in his everyday practice.

[1] Gertrude Wilson and Gladys Ryland, *Social Group Work Practice* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1949), p. 587.

Since it is the agency, and only the agency, that prescribes the setting in which services are given and received, its statements of purpose will provide a focus for these variously derived, but usually mutually supporting, values and goals, and will determine the kind and direction of services to be instituted for their implementation.

It follows, in the interest of maintaining an essential unity in direction and integrity of operation of the parts within the whole, that all processes used must be in harmony with the agency's central purposes and directed unswervingly to their fulfillment. This principle applies with particular force to the supervisory process, charged as it is with direct oversight of and accountability for the agency's program in progress, and for the selection, assignment, and in-service training of workers, as well as for evaluation of their performance on the job.

The ultimate objective of worker supervision in the group service agency can, therefore, be stated rather simply: it is to implement agency purposes and plans, and continually to deepen the quality of the service through which the agency seeks to express its purposes. The immediate aim emerging from and to be kept continuously related to this basic over-all objective, is that through sensitive guidance and practical help geared to the known requirements of jobs, and the needs of workers holding them, their efforts become progressively more and more effective.

Growth and development of workers as persons, do not, in themselves, constitute the end to which the supervisory process is directed; unquestionably they can, should, and frequently do accompany a sense of increased ability, opportunity for creative use of self and satisfactions gained in the doing of the job, and it is not difficult to see how sensitive and skillful supervision can contribute to this

desirable experience of personal growth. The primary focus, however, if the process is not to become confused, unsure, and inconsistent, must be held steadily on directing all the efforts of both supervisor and worker to carrying out the purpose of the agency in terms of its chosen form of services to people, and to carrying them out well.

As suggested in the preceding chapter, realism in relation both to community needs and demands and to the availability of resources, including those of group leadership, requires recognition by the agency of the validity of developing services that may differ from group to group in immediate objective, program content, and worker skills called for. Such a differential approach will more readily ensure particularization in determining, within the framework of over-all purposes, the agency's objectives for a given group and the necessary equipment of the worker to be assigned to it. These considerations, in turn, will be important factors in determining, realistically, objectives for the supervision of the worker assigned to the particular group.

Functions of Supervision

It is expected, in our culture, that an agency going into business to offer services to people, does so as a responsible organization. This means that it holds itself accountable, in a general sense, to the community as a whole and, in a more precise sense, to all who support its efforts morally and materially.

This accountability presents the agency with certain organizational imperatives; characteristically these are met in the setting up of appropriate administrative structure within which there are established processes and procedures "or means by which the aims of the organization

are determined, plans are made for achieving those aims, and the plans are carried out." [2]

In any listing of their administrative processes, agencies will usually include supervision as one of the means by which they aim to ensure that what they undertake to do is adequately carried out. In other words, the supervisory function is seen as lying squarely within the administrative setup of the agency and is designed to carry a definite part of the total administrative load.

The writer believes it is important to keep this relation of supervision to administration very clear; the more so, because one question among many which now engage people's thinking about supervision is as to whether the administrative components in the process—particularly those where authority and power are seen to be implicit—do not constitute too great a threat to its educational function in relation to the particular area of practice to be taught, to the teacher-learner relationship, and to freedom in functioning for the worker.

To speculate as to whether, in view of such a question, supervision might be divested of administrative responsibilities and have these placed elsewhere suggests to the writer an excursion into a never-never land of unreality.

Bertha Reynolds, in a chapter on "Learning in an Administrative Setting," [3] sees the social agency as "the place to *learn* social case work or any form of social work." She continues:

> The . . . worker or student who works with one or a few individuals at a time, and is supervised by one person, is

[2] Helen D. Beavers, *Administration in the YWCA: Principles and Procedures* (New York: Woman's Press, 1944), p. 6.

[3] Bertha C. Reynolds, *Learning and Teaching in the Practice of Social Work* (New York: Rinehart & Company, Inc., 1942), p. 204. Used by permission.

> nevertheless part of an agency setting in which he cannot function as a foreign body. For better or worse, the agency and its place in the community, its policies and questionings, influence profoundly all that he personally may do. It is for this reason that we cannot begin to talk about individual supervision until we see the individual in his setting and relate him to the whole as well as to the principles and procedures he is learning to use.

More recently, George Brager addressed himself to aspects of this question in a provocative paper.[4] Charging social work literature with being "more replete with 'shoulds' than 'is's,' " he finds that "while our expectation that a supervisee be willing to 'share feelings,' overcome resistances, has been subject to intense psychological exploration, it has not sufficiently provided for other contravening realities. We barely have noticed," he says, "that the supervisee is an employee, who is paid a salary, and whose career is inevitably affected by the supervisor's judgment, however objective we may hope that judgment will be." Speculating as to possible reasons for an apparent "concern for professional emancipation," Mr. Brager wonders "whether we explore the problem of professional independence most fully because this suits our self-image while, with status discomfort, we ignore the area of the social worker as a salaried employee, who is supervised because he is a member of an organization which is accountable to some community."

With the exception of numerically insignificant instances of private practice, the profession of social work is practiced within social agencies—themselves an integral part of the organized structure of social welfare services

[4] George Brager, "Facing Current Questions in Relation to Supervision," Paper presented at the Colloquium, Pennsylvania School of Social Work, June, 1959.

in any community. Learning for the profession cannot be thought of apart from learning to practice more and more competently and responsively within the policies, the administrative structure, and the procedures and requirements of the agencies that make the services possible; these, in the agency in which one chooses to work, form not only the setting in which learning takes place but an indispensable element in the content to be learned.

It is the writer's belief that this content cannot be separated, without serious loss, from the content designed to help a worker master the processes involved in giving direct service to individual and group; the point of their convergence is the accountability of the worker for what he has contracted to do.

In connection with this area of discussion, readers who have not yet done so, are urged to read Jeanette Hanford's paper on "Integration of the Teaching and Administrative Aspects of Supervision" [5]; it contains a highly relevant statement in which the various aspects of any agency's responsibility are drawn together, and this in a manner so succinct and yet comprehensive, that it would be futile to try to improve on it. It is quoted, as follows:

> Can we agree that an agency has responsibility: (1) for defining its function and operating within a framework appropriate to the needs of the community and the skills and resources of its staff, (2) for creating a setting within which the staff can carry out the agency's services and for helping staff members to function at the optimum level of their abilities, (3) for knowing enough about the work being done (a) to plan program, assess unmet needs, and report to the community, and (b) to accept responsibility for the job being done, to assign work, to make the best

[5] In *Administration, Supervision and Consultation* (New York: Family Service Association of America, 1955), pp. 51-58. Used by permission.

use of staff skills, and to promote staff members wisely? If these responsibilities are accepted, does it not follow that teaching may be part of the administrative function, to be carried out discriminatingly and balanced with other needs which the worker may have so that functioning may be effective?

Charlotte Towle's simple, direct statement, "Supervision is an administrative process with an educational purpose," [6] clearly emphasizes a view of supervision as a process involving inextricably related and interdependent functions of administering and teaching.

Supervision, in these terms, can be effective only as it is seen and operated as a dynamic process; the writer believes that it is its teaching function—moving out beyond the more static, generalized inference of "oversight"—that can protect this quality. Creative teaching proceeds on the expectation of movement and change; supervision, at its best, provides for shifts in focus and content of teaching and learning in direct relation to the growing mastery of basic knowledge and development of competency of the individual learning worker; this is no Book of Rules approach!

To use what is sometimes thought of as an overworked term in social work, supervision is seen as an "enabling" process; some connotations of the term, as applied to the supervisory process would be these: "making able," giving strength through support, giving a worker authority for carrying a definable job, rejecting the "do as I do" approach in favor of an assumption of initiative and some competency on the part of the worker, as well as a pledge of encouragement and support as he calls on his own re-

[6] *Common Human Needs* (Washington, D. C.: Social Security Board, Public Assistance Report No. 8, 1954, 132 pp.).

sources and energies to meet the week-in, week-out demands of his job.

Supervision, in these terms, gives dignity to the job of every worker and enhances its significance to him; "they know I am here, and what I do is important enough to assign a staff member as a point of reference for me—somebody to whom I can turn for help as I need it." This is a particularly important feeling for the thousands of volunteer and other part-time workers employed in the group service agencies.

Succeeding chapters will deal in greater detail with the implementation of objectives and functions considered here, drawing attention to basic concepts on which supervision in social work rests, and discussing the processes involved and the skills required for their competent use.

CHAPTER 3

Supervision as an Educational Process

REALIZATION THAT MERELY TO OVERSEE WORKERS on the job cannot, of itself, ensure good quality of performance, is readily seen in the importance attributed to the educational function of supervision by all types of agencies in the broad field of social welfare.

The Supervisor Is an Educator

"Staff development" is a term in common usage in connection with an agency's planning for staffing its services, and training on the job is usually considered a central purpose of its program of worker supervision.

This means that the staff member assuming supervisory responsibility in relation to other members of the full-time staff, program volunteers, or part-time paid aides, should be both equipped for, and ready to accept, an over-all educational role and responsibility for an appreciable amount of direct teaching.

The writer has already recorded her conviction that in these terms, supervision in the group service agency requires not only that it be seen as a professional function to be assumed solely by appropriately equipped full-time staff members, but that the best preparation, from the point of view of its relatedness to the demands of the situation, is that provided in a program of professional education in social work, with a concentration in group work.

There is a steady increase in statements of "M.S.W. required" in connection with vacancies in supervisory positions in group service agencies, but it would be unrealistic to ignore the fact that currently, and possibly for some time to come, the supply of such professionally trained workers will not keep pace with the demand for their services; supervisors with training in other disciplines and appreciable work experience are giving valuable service in this area, frequently availing themselves of opportunities for adding to their equipment through attendance at institutes.

Unhappily, however, there is a still too prevalent practice of giving supervisory title and responsibility to very young fresh-out-of-college recruits. Supervision is not a job for beginners. With little or no experience in group leadership, and limited understanding of what is involved in the provision of such services within the complex structural settings of established agencies, they cannot be expected to be ready to give significant help in these areas to other workers.

Such misplacement of responsibility must inevitably result in a superficial level of supervisory practice, unsatisfying to the person engaged in it, unhelpful to those it is designed to help, and unrewarding to the agency as a staff investment.

The frustration experienced by young workers facing such inappropriate demands accounts, in large measure, for high turnover in this group, and for sheer wastage of manpower in the too frequent ultimate loss to the field of promising young workers, well motivated and possessing strong personal attributes, who become disillusioned by the manner and timing of their introduction to its demands.

Further consideration of the educational responsibilities assumed in supervision can serve only to underscore again the highly professional nature of its requirements.

Learning and Teaching Through Supervision

"There is a prevailing idea that what one knows, he can, *ipso facto,* teach. That idea comes from a subject-centered concept of education. When education is oriented to *the person who is to learn plus the situation to be mastered,* there is something more to teaching than proving to the learner that one knows the subject." [1]

In this succinct statement, a great teacher holds out, simultaneously, both stimulus and support to the seriously motivated supervisor: *stimulus* in the idea that his is no easy berth, adequately cared for by what he already knows about groups and individuals and ways of serving them through a guided group process; he has to learn to become a teacher, and be able to communicate to others this and other essential knowledge and to encourage creativity and

[1] Bertha C. Reynolds, *Learning and Teaching in the Practice of Social Work* (New York: Rinehart & Company, Inc., 1942), p. 83.

self-discovery on the part of learners assigned to him for help; and *support* in the assurance that a newer concept of education, peculiarly adapted to our needs, is, as Miss Reynolds said in another connection, "ready to our hands."

In approaching and maintaining his educational role, the supervisor will do well to adopt, early, the basic working principle: "Study the learner and learn how he learns."

Some systematic thinking about differing degrees of readiness to learn, and the stages through which learning may move along, will make it easier to individualize the worker and serve as a deterrent to any neat and easy assumption that all workers in a category will enter the process at the same point and, after due process, through the supervisor's ministrations, come out at another "same point," having learned the same things and being now ready to use themselves and what they have learned in identical fashion.

How do people learn? What enhances learning? What may tend to impede or delay it? What does it mean to be "a good teacher"?

In social work, the development of supervision as a teaching process has, through the years, been built on that field's basic area of scientific knowledge—human personality and behavior; more recently social work has sought, in its supervisory practices, to integrate knowledge and insights from the philosophical foundations and psychologically based principles and methods of the field of education.

Charlotte Towle, in *The Learner in Education for the Professions*,[2] makes a notable contribution to bringing closer together theories of learning developed within social work and formulations by educational psychologists, that,

[2] (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1954), Ch. 2, pp. 23-51.

cumulatively, are being built into newer theories of learning in the field of education. She believes that when "social work educators, . . . alert to the connections between the factors and forces in the personal life situation and the professional situation," are watchful lest "the import of the educational process be obscured," and when educational psychologists, "long concerned with affective factors in learning" increasingly direct their studies of learning in close relation to "the fact that the situation cannot be isolated from the life-situation," it can be "expected that psychiatry and psychology will come more closely together to provide an enriched foundation science for the use of educators at all levels."

As suggested, this merging of knowledge, insight, and method promises a very rich resource for the supervisor seeking constantly to add to his equipment for teaching.

Bertha Reynolds gives us a stimulating approach and a very useful base for thinking about all this. Social work and the foundation sciences on which its practice rests, provide, in a major sense, the frame of reference within which she develops her theories of learning; it is not surprising, however, that with her known capacity for exploring adventurously into realms of thought developing in fields of different orientation, she should have achieved an integration in her own thinking that makes her contribution to our deeper understanding, a doubly rich one.

Introducing her chapter on "Conscious Intelligence and Learning" Miss Reynolds reminds us:

> Learning an art, which is knowledge applied to doing something in which the whole person participates, cannot be carried on solely as an intellectual process, no matter how clearly and attractively subject matter is presented with the aim of insuring that the conscious attention of the learner shall not flag. As progressive educators have

> pointed out, unless there is opportunity to practice its use, there is invariably a gap between knowing a thing and being able to do something about it.[3]

Her formulation of "the stages of use of conscious intelligence as learning progresses" is a very useful one and provides a framework within which we can consciously draw on the combined resources of knowledge and insight on learning afforded by social work and the developing theory in the field of progressive education.

According to Miss Reynolds five identifiable stages in the learning process are as follows:

> 1. "The stage of acute consciousness of self, with 'stage fright' as the classic example"

Recognition of the universality of this human experience in face of the threat of the unknown, will help to signalize from the very outset of a supervisory relationship, the need for teaching that is person centered rather than focused on the acquisition of subject matter; it will call for the utmost in respect for persons as well as psychological insight; people learn with their feelings as well as with intellect, and learning can be blocked by anxious or negative feelings even when good mental ability is present.

Experienced supervisors have come to recognize and deal constructively with such responses to this initial stage of acute preoccupation with self as deep silence, excessive talkativeness, "smarty" replies or helpless immobility, or any of the other ways of acting that people use when they do not want to reveal how scared they are. A student describing his first day in field work, and a conference with

[3] Bertha C. Reynolds, *Learning and Teaching in the Practice of Social Work* (New York: Rinehart & Company, Inc., 1942), Ch. 7, pp. 69-85. The matter quoted in enumerating and describing the "five stages" is used by permission of the copyright owners.

his instructor, said, ". . . it was as if I didn't hear people . . . a stranger to myself . . . I felt completely alone. . . ."

"The role of the teacher in this stage of learning," says Miss Reynolds, "is *security giving,* helping the learner to find the solid ground of personal adequacy he already has on which to plant his feet while he struggles with the new experience."

2. "The stage of sink or swim adaptation"

Here the learner, who may still be bewildered, is seen as "catching hold of something in the situation to which he can respond. He gets an inkling of what people want of him. . . . If he hits upon a response which others react to favorably, he is encouraged to go on."

How important to remind ourselves, here, of the need to begin where the learner is; to note where—even if it seems somewhat far upstream—the worker takes hold; his initiative is to be safeguarded; people learn best by doing; to learn, the worker must be doing something; the something may not be very effective, but he will relinquish it the more readily as he comes to feel more secure and more able, with the help of the supervisor to analyze his own activity. The supervisor can help, too, by suggesting some activity in which the worker is relatively secure; he is freer then to devote some energy to learning what is new in the situation. The relationship of the teacher, Miss Reynolds says, "can be made stimulating as well as protective, if it gives some picture of what fine accomplishment is, along with reassurance that one is not expected to reach it immediately."

Honest accreditation of what the worker brings, and begins to do, will be important; there must be some degree of satisfaction in the "doing" for learning to take place.

There is a warning that "this second stage of barely

keeping up with what the situation demands . . . may last a long time," and that it "is apt to be a period of dependence upon approval or disapproval from people who are seemingly at home in the situation."

Obviously there is some danger, here, that "dependence on approval" may develop into a pattern of dependency, and it will take skill to shift the focus from the anxious, self-conscious learner, himself, to the significance and meaning of what he is doing; the objective, here, is encouragement of interest in and application to a task as a means of diverting the worker from dependence on the personal authority of a teacher.

3. "The stage of understanding the situation without power to control one's own activity in it"

Here the learner, freer, now, from preoccupation with self and therefore more able to study situations as they are in actuality, comes to what seems almost sudden comprehension of what is involved and what is required of the worker.

Miss Reynolds recalls the learner, well known to supervisors, who one bright day says, "All at once it came to me." She goes on to point out, however, that the learner still has a hurdle to surmount: "He thinks he has mastered the art, and he finds the practice of what he understands so well still lagging behind. . . . He understands what should be done, but is very uneven in his ability to do it."

Learning is still not wholly internalized and appropriated for use, nor integrated, yet, with earlier experience to form a continuum.

Glib use of "shop talk" may give an impression of greater competence than the worker has; supervisors who have had the disappointing experience of very meager production

from a worker who "talks so well," will need to recall their own earlier struggles to put into practice the good they were beginning to know, but whose meaning they had not yet comprehended.

A hazard to the teacher-supervisor is that as Miss Reynolds points out, it is "hard . . . to avoid thinking, 'He can do better if he wants to,' " and to be "tempted to use criticism more in retaliation for the supervisor's frustration than for its teaching value."

Actually the learning situation is now one of great opportunity, and constructive criticism can be taken hold of and utilized in a way that was impossible earlier. The real significance of the supervisory relationship and its possible helpfulness may be fully grasped for the first time as the learning worker is encouraged to see that readiness to admit and ability to analyze failure, and to appeal for help in redirecting his use of what he has come to understand, is a mark of the strong rather than the weak person.

4. "The stage of relative mastery, in which one can both understand and control one's own activity in the art to be learned"

This is the stage, Miss Reynolds says, where "what was new in the experience has really become a part of the person. He does not have to think of himself, out of fear of what the experience will do to him. He knows he can deal with it, and why, because he understands what it is and what its demands will be. . . . The person can think of himself in a new way—objectively. He can see himself working as he might see another person in the situation working. He can criticize and change his approach as the situation demands something different."

It will be very important, here, for the supervisor to give the worker plenty of room for independent function-

ing with trust and without fear; unrecognized or undealt with, our own needs may get in the way; a supervisor's status can seem enhanced by a worker's dependence, but the worker probably will not learn so well that way!

5. "The stage of learning to teach what one has mastered"

This stage of learning, in the terms in which Miss Reynolds describes it, holds a particular challenge for the supervisor himself.

In this stage the supervisor is seen as free enough to be able to understand how each learning worker operates best; which motivations encourage his learning and which serve to block learning; at what points help is needed and where, conceivably, proffered help might actually become a hindrance.

The supervisor who is wholeheartedly committed to the pursuit of knowledge and the acquiring of the disciplines necessary for the "good teacher" use of that knowledge in helping other workers, will find in some words of Charles Beard a goal worthy of his deepest efforts:

> In the wider ranges of social relations it is not words that count, but capacity to understand, analyze, bring information to bear, to choose, to resolve, and to act wisely. Competence in the individual, not dogma, is our supreme objective.[4]

[4] Charles A. Beard, *A Charter for the Social Sciences* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1932), p. 96.

CHAPTER 4

The Supervisory Relationship

THOUGH THERE IS INCREASING USE OF GROUP methods for implementing certain aspects of the supervisory function, the individual conference remains the basic configuration within which learning and teaching take place. In educational terms, this implies a tutorial method which must, in the nature of the case, bring two persons into close, face-to-face contact. Each will know, and feel, more about the other than would be true in the more diffused class or group situation; and the impact on each, of their interaction, will be vastly more potent.

This means that the relationship factor is well in the

foreground, giving rise to one of the most basic concepts underlying the supervisory process, namely that achievement of its highly important objectives will, in the final analysis, rest heavily on the quality of the relationship within which the two persons involved work together.

In a situation in which the behavior of either can serve to deflect and dissipate the positive and constructive intent of the other, each is accountable; it is clear, however, that assumption of the professional supervisory role carries with it a major responsibility for establishing the relationship on a sound and potentially productive basis.

What, precisely, does this responsibility entail?

Need for Clarity About the Respective Roles

Within the purposes, function, and structure of an agency, any relationship develops on a healthier basis of mutual respect and co-operation when the parties to it are clear about their respective roles.

Readers with experience in group leadership will readily recall how important this matter of role is in relating to groups as direct leader; they know that sometimes to test him, sometimes through ignorance, group members will ascribe inappropriate roles to the worker and attempt to relate to him on that basis; they may want to make of him a fellow member, or their president or chairman, or a policeman, or a busy factotum; if the worker, taken unawares, is not to slip in a way that can only create confusion for himself and the group, he must, in appropriate ways, make conscious and continuous effort to establish and interpret his true role.

So it is in the supervisory situation; the relationship is off to a better start when each party to it is clear about his role and that of the other person; as is the case in the group

situation, the relationship becomes complicated when the respective roles are not clear.

Some haziness, on the part of the worker, particularly initially, about his own and the supervisor's role, is a fairly frequent state of affairs, and one that the supervisor must learn to deal with helpfully. There is no blinking the fact that just as in the group situation, major responsibility for clarifying roles and establishing the nature of the relationship falls on the agency assigned worker; in terms of our immediate concern this is the supervisor.

Concepts of the Supervisory Role in Evolution. With further reference to a statement in Miss Robinson's book on supervision,[1] to the effect that supervision in casework grew up within the casework process and was indigenous to its practice, it will be well to consider briefly the influence of developing concepts in casework on views about and exercise of the supervisory role.

In early days when caseworkers tended to be more occupied with making over the client, the casework supervisor, perhaps understandably, tended to efforts to make over the worker—usually in his own image, seeming to say, "Do as I do and you will be right," or possibly, "Do it this way, because I say so." Here and there, in social agencies today, vestigial remains of this older, more rigid, concept persist.

Then, for a time, it seemed that the concept of the supervisory role went off in another direction. Possibly under the intoxicating influence of new psychoanalytic knowledge which had brought revolutionary new insights on behavior to bear on casework practice, there was, too frequently, a tendency on the part of the supervisor to

[1] Virginia P. Robinson, *Supervision in Social Casework* (Chapel Hill, N. C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1936), p. xii.

overinvolvement with the personality structure and the personal problems of the worker; in this situation, at its worst, the concerns of the real client grew dim, and the worker tended to become the client who *must* have personal problems, for to seem to be without them might signify supervisory failure to uncover and treat!

One is reminded of the need for eternal vigilance against slipping into this role every time a student in field work, whether with justification or not, says, with a knowing look, "I think my supervisor is caseworking me!"

Newer thinking about the supervisory role, in the field of social work, shows steady departure from these earlier ways. Miss Robinson, in 1936,[2] describes as the problem she set for herself in writing a book on supervision, "... lifting supervision out of its confusing entanglement with the casework process, in order to see it as a unique teaching process."

In approaching this problem she gives as her major concern "to define supervision as a distinct and unique educational process, to describe its form and its limits, and the essential constant elements in structure and movement which underlie the differences that appear in different situations with different contents." [3]

Charlotte Towle speaks of supervision as "an administrative process with an educational purpose," [4] and in current-day efforts to define the process in greater detail, the terms "education," "consultation," "evaluation" and "administration" are in common use to indicate the most important aspects of the supervisor's role.

It is within this framework, then, that the supervisor

[2] *Ibid.*, p. xii.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. xii.
[4] *Common Human Needs* (Washington, D. C.: Social Security Board, Public Assistance Report No. 8, 1954, 132 pp.), p. 95.

in the group service agency will need to identify his role, develop ability in assuming it and achieve clarity in interpreting its characteristics to the workers he supervises.

The Role of the Supervisor in the Group Service Agency. For some supervisors in this type of agency there may be need to give some special thought to what may be involved for them, individually, in shifting from the role of direct worker with groups to supervising other persons carrying this responsibility. Though ultimately accountable, administratively, for an aspect of the agency's program of service in which a particular group, with an assigned worker, is one unit, the supervisor must be clear that immediate responsibility for work with that group has been delegated to another person. Unresolved feelings around relinquishing one role before experiencing satisfaction in a new one may be revealed in attitudes of possessiveness toward groups and even active interference in their affairs in ways that are damaging to the leader-group relationships of their assigned workers and confusing to everybody concerned; almost inevitably it will affect, negatively, the supervisory relationship he is trying to establish with these workers.

Ability to share with other workers knowledge and skill gained in direct practice with groups, will be greatly influenced by the supervisor's acceptance or nonacceptance of himself in the new role; it is only as he comes to feel identified with it, and more and more comfortable with its demands, that the deep satisfactions its practice affords will become accessible to him.

A review of the functions most commonly associated with the supervisory role in the group service agency, should help to keep the account straight. Whatever other area of responsibility his work contract with the agency

calls for, his role as supervisor will generally include the following specifics:

Recruitment and selection of volunteer and paid part-time workers if the agency's procedures assign this responsibility to him.

Orientation of and job assignment to all workers he is to supervise; it will involve help to workers to organize themselves in relation to their specific jobs.

Teaching through individual conferences and group meetings, in whatever terms called for in relation to workers' needs to learn on the job.

Continuous consultation with individual workers, in regularly scheduled conferences on problems arising in their jobs.

Interpretation of agency purposes, policies and procedures, standards of work, and expected levels of production.

Appraisal of worker performance on the job, involving administrative responsibility for recommendations as called for by the agency's established procedures.

The extent and quality of a supervisor's understanding and acceptance of these aspects of his role will, without question, affect his ability to interpret them in positive fashion to the workers he supervises.

Clarification of the Worker's Role and Place in the Supervisory Situation. The responsibilities of a full-time staff member will usually be outlined in a written job description; early conferences devoted to job organization should be directed to making quite specific what may be couched in general terms in the job description; only so

will the lineaments of a particular job come clear, and the major aspects of the role entailed stand out in sharp relief.

With this same objective of job clarification, many group service agencies are experimenting with manuals or other descriptive statements of job content for their volunteer and part-time paid workers; the supervisor in this situation will be involved in the same process of elucidation. Experience indicates that the provision of job descriptive material, and careful work in clarification of requirements, contribute to increased appreciation, on the part of volunteers and other part-time workers, of the significance of what they have undertaken, and a feeling of being supported in tackling it.

There will be other aspects of worker role, more subtle in their implications than those related to specifics in job assignments, and, by the same token, often more generative of feelings that may directly affect the supervisory relationship.

The student assigned to an agency for field work by a graduate professional school will know he is a student, but he may be having some difficulty working at it! Students whose professional education has been delayed, and who come to school after years of work experience quite often find it hard, particularly at the outset, to adjust to the student role and may tend to want to separate themselves from its strictures in the work situation of the field work agency; intellectual acceptance of the situation may not prepare them adequately for coming to terms with their field instructor's dual role, as agency supervisor and as instructor, responsible, with school established requirements, for evaluation of their progress as students preparing to enter a profession.

Undergraduate students for whom the experience in the agency will seem quite removed from the traditional

learning setting of the classroom, may also need help in consciously extending their student role into the work situation throughout the period of their employment and not just at evaluation time when the granting of a course credit at school may be involved.

Obviously, in such situations, adjustment to more than one role will not be the exclusive domain of the worker; the supervisor, too, will need to take careful account of and adjust to its special demands. The adjustment of either to his own situation must, inevitably, affect the manner of adjustment of the other and the relationship between them.

A factor entering into the supervisory situation with every worker, regardless of his classification or precise job assignment, will be his assumption of the role of supervisee and his adjustment to all that will be involved for him in being supervised at all.

Confused images of himself in this role—frequently with negative overtones in relation to implied inadequacy on his part, a lower ranking on the totem pole, feelings of lack of appreciation of his competence and, perhaps, a need to resist authority in all its manifestations, will provide fertile ground for projecting distorted images of the supervisor's role. Negative or overexhortative response by the supervisor can only compound this confusion, and the supervisory relationship will be shaky from the start. The situation is one that calls for the utmost in positive approach based on unfailing regard for the worker, understanding of his feelings and respect for what he brings to the job in terms of native ability, acquired skills, and life experience.

Clear, simple, matter-of-fact interpretation of the supervisory relationship by the supervisor and understanding

acceptance of the worker's response, even when it is "cagey," questioning, or downright resistive, will go a long way toward ensuring perspective and gaining co-operation.

Some Attitudes and Feelings Affecting the Relationship

The preceding material on the importance of clarification of role has suggested some particular situations where feelings and attitudes will very certainly influence the supervisory relationship involved and affect its use by both supervisor and worker; it remains to draw together, in more systematic fashion, the possible operation of a wide range of individual attitudes and feelings that can affect, pervasively, one of the most significant relationship configurations provided by the agency.

Some of these attitudes and feelings on the part of its participants are those that will enter into and affect any human relationship; others are largely induced, or at least intensified, by factors inherent in and peculiarly characteristic of the supervisory situation itself; they constitute, in a sense, a sort of occupational hazard!

Notes taken in discussions with second-year professional students and workers newly involved as supervisors, indicate a wide range of attitude and feeling about this new experience. Asked how they felt about being assigned supervisory responsibility in relation to other workers, these groups, with a high degree of unanimity, listed the following:

Gratification over the confidence in ability indicated by the assignment.
Feeling of enhancement of status.
Excitement, pleasure, stimulation.

Satisfaction over an opportunity to get work done according to their own ideas as to how it should be done.

Fear of the responsibility entailed and of possible lack of equipment to meet its demands.

Fear of failure.

Fear of the factor of authority implicit in the role and of what its exercise, in relation to fellow workers "might do to relationships"; fear that this aspect of the supervisory role would serve to separate them from fellow workers.

Mixed feelings in relation to the inevitable decrease in opportunity for direct practice with groups in which great satisfaction had been experienced and the challenge of the new responsibilities.

It may be useful to cogitate a bit over how some of these feelings of new supervisors about supervisory responsibility might affect relationship with a worker.

If, in extraordinary ascendancy, feelings of gratification over recognition by the agency might lead to preoccupation with the power aspects of its structure and other areas of administrative responsibility associated with supervisory status; this could tend to put the worker on the losing end of things, in relation to needed attention and support. Delusions of grandeur on the part of a supervisor do not create a setting in which a worker can feel comfortable in the assurance that the focus of concern is on helping *him* to do *his* job.

A drive to get work done according to one's own ideas may beget an inflexible response to errors, or lead to mistaken notions that one must have all the answers. Using people merely as extensions of oneself and attempting to mold them in one's own image can result only in failure to

achieve certain primary objectives of supervision, namely to foster worker independence and self-reliance and to ensure the release of the particular contribution he has to make.

Some anxiety in the new situation, and initial uncertainty about one's equipment for successful performance in it, are natural and to be expected. There are real hazards here. Equipment and experience may *indeed* be inadequate; status in the agency *may* be endangered, for one *can* fail! Supervision of older workers or of highly trained specialists in particular areas of program skill packs a real threat. Whatever the degree of uncertainty here, the really important things will be how the supervisor deals with his feelings about it; whether, in his direct relations with workers he is seeking to help, he can keep the focus of attention and activity where it belongs on the workers' needs rather than on his own and on how, with the help of his supervisor, the worker plans to add to his equipment for the new job.

Unresolved feelings *will* affect the relationship with the worker and will also get in the way of the supervisor's best use of his own knowledge, skills, and experience—areas of qualification that undoubtedly entered into his selection for supervisory responsibility in the first place.

The supervisor who, fearful of getting out on a limb and revealing lack of knowledge, tends to keep conferences on a "safe" but superficial level, should take heart from Fern Lowry's description of a secure and able supervisor as one who can say "I don't know" and still be relaxed.[5]

There may be a tendency, under the impact of anxiety, to "tell" rather than "listen"; telling all one knows and

[5] Fern Lowry, "A Philosophy of Supervision in Social Casework," *Proceedings,* National Conference of Social Work (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1936).

structuring it to impress the worker may bolster one's own self-esteem, but the worker may get lost in the process.

It will be well to remember, too, that the worker will also have feelings of insecurity in the new situation; if one is "listening" rather than "telling," there will be more opportunity for genuine appraisal of what may lie back of withdrawal or defensiveness on his part; need to conceal how little *he* knows may well be the real reason rather than the too quickly conjectured one of hostile resistance to the supervisor.

The supervisor is inevitably the symbol of the "knowing" to the worker, and it is to be remembered that the latter is in a relatively less advantageous position; what may seem like active rejection to the supervisor may actually be a situation in which all the worker's energies are going into self-protection. Preoccupied with his own anxieties, the supervisor may easily fail to explore what undermines the worker's sense of security.

There is probably no aspect of the supervisory role that triggers off more feeling on the part of both supervisor and supervisee than the inherent authority and power it carries. Mention has already been made of fears expressed by many new supervisors that the assumption of an authority role would operate divisively to separate them from fellow workers and possibly result in the breaking of old relationships.

The setting of many group service agencies is recognizedly more informal than that of other social agencies; greater mobility of staff within the physical facility itself, as well as the nature of the program activities going on, have served to encourage across-the-board staff relationships of a semisocial, nonprofessional nature; it is a situation that should be given careful consideration by staff, individually and as a professional group, to the end of gain-

ing perspective and understanding with which to seek to conserve its values and, at the same time, safeguard professional relationships from possibly confusing encroachment.

Supervisors' responses to this factor of authority indicate a wide range of attitudes and feelings; for some, it becomes the symbol of heavy responsibility they are not ready to assume; the supervisor who has not come to terms with the fact of delegated administrative responsibility as integral to his job, will have a particularly hard time with the necessity for making decisions and assuming responsibility for evaluation of worker performance.

Earlier experience of being subjected to malpractice in the use of authority can give rise to strong resistive reaction. "If I am to look and act like *that,* what will it do to me?" has paralyzed many a supervisor and caused him to evade decision making and actions essential to sound performance within his role.

Others argue that even with an adequate concept of the role and the responsibility one carries, the odds are against any efforts to use them creatively, because of the strong community patterns and stereotypes of the manager, the "boss man," the foreman, already lodged in the minds of those one is seeking to help.

Objective examination of what, indeed, the authority is that one exerts as a supervisor should help to bring a needed reality note into the consideration, possibly creating a little more light and eliminating some of the heat. That he will, inevitably, be on the receiving end of a wide range of attitudes toward authority is to be accepted; within the framework of his total job, he needs to identify the actuality of his power, accept the fact that it can engender feelings, be prepared to help with those feelings, and bend his efforts unswervingly to use the power he

holds in nondestructive fashion. The fact of authority is not in question; it is the manner of its use that counts.

The burden of being ultimately responsible—and, as it were, always on the firing line—weighs more heavily on some supervisors than on others; feelings of being sorry for oneself, in face of what seems an intolerable load, tend to get communicated to workers, with questionable results; a similarly destructive approach may be the outcome of feelings of frustration over real or imagined limitations in the work setting; the supervisor's total job brings him very close to specifics in the operation of such limiting factors as faulty administrative structure, shortage of funds and dearth of resource facilities, inadequacies in personnel practices and salary standards, community pressures and overheavy job loads, inadequate definition of agency function, narrowly based interpretation of its beliefs and purposes, and inconsistencies in their implementation. These limitations may be very real, and feelings about them equally so; it is important to see, however, that to accept limitations and work within them in the immediate job contract period does not, in itself, constitute condonation, particularly if all available professional channels are being used responsibly to bring about change; the supervisory relationship with a worker does not provide such a channel; when used by the supervisor primarily for ventilation of his own feelings it can be seen only as an inappropriate, if not unfair, passing on of a burden to the shoulders of a person still further removed from facilities for doing something about it; the climate created will block rather than further the purposes of worker supervision.

From time to time, in this chapter, and in the preceding one on how people learn, there has been reference to what the worker may bring to the supervisory situation in the way of attitude and feeling; how he may behave under

their impact and the resulting effect on the supervisory relationship. This is an area for primary and continuous study by the supervisor if he is to develop sensitivity and gain insight and understanding with which to direct his own activity.

A somewhat summary approach here will serve to recall areas already touched on and provide a base for moving, in a later chapter, into closer study of the supervisory conference as the major setting within which the supervisory relationship develops.

There is an element of threat in any new and strange situation for those entering it. Supervision is such a situation and the worker will move into it with no less and probably more trepidation than the supervisor, for he knows less what to expect and what will be expected of him. A basic fear, here, is loss of status and self-image as an independently functioning being; elaborate defense mechanisms may be employed to ward off such loss—"so that nobody will know I am afraid." [6]

In other instances response to the anxiety felt will take the form of extreme dependency on supervisory support and immobility if that is not provided for every step.

The supervisor may find himself the object of manipulation or seductive behavior on the part of a worker preoccupied with need to have the situation structured nearer to the level of his tolerance of discomfort. A good deal of energy may go into these efforts at self-protection, frequently leaving narrow margins of free energy with which to tackle the requirements of the job. The supervisor's response to resulting slowness in use of help becomes a crucial point in the developing relationship.

Even less anxious workers may reveal ambivalence in approaching the situation; and movement, accompanied

[6] Rodgers and Hammerstein, "The King and I."

by interest and excitement, may be followed by withdrawal and nonresponse as the worker feels now lured, now repelled.

It will be important to differentiate carefully between feelings of anxiety to be expected in any new and demanding situation and that persistent mood of anxiety more neurotic in base. Feelings of anxiety do not necessarily immobilize; for the learning worker, who is clearly focused on what is to be learned, they will frequently serve as stimulus for extension of self into new effort.

Such anxiety induced responses as defensiveness and self-protection; tendency to project blame on agency, group members, fellow workers or supervisor for nonproductivity; dependence and self-depreciation; withdrawal and seeming resistance—or that baffling passivity of the determinedly noninvolved, who lets the waves wash over him—will call for sensitive understanding and helpfulness on the part of the supervisor; these responses become serious only as they persist.

The establishment of relationship should be seen, not as an end in itself; it is not a case of relationship for relationship's sake, but rather to identify it as a primary means through which the purposes of supervision can be achieved and to establish, as intimate, the connection between the dynamic quality of the means used and the quality of the ultimate outcome in terms of staff development and program enrichment.

CHAPTER 5

Recruitment and Selection of Personnel

WHO THE WORKER IS AS A HUMAN BEING, HIS MOtivation for seeking the particular job, and the educational preparation, experience, and skills he brings to it, are matters of supreme importance to the staff member who is assigned, as supervisor, to relate him to the agency and help him take hold of his designated responsibilities.

Employment procedures may differ from agency to agency, and within a given agency, between those established for the appointment of full-time staff and those followed in the recruitment and selection of part-time workers, whether paid or volunteer.

In either case, the particular procedure followed will determine the point at which the supervisor enters the situation; all that precedes that point, however, will inevitably influence what follows when the supervisor assumes his distinctive responsibility in relation to the person employed.

Employment Procedures with Reference to Full-Time Staff

In the group service agencies, the board of directors, ultimately responsible for agency policies, program, and budget, is regarded as the employer of full-time staff, and, as such, usually gives formal approval to their appointment. Direct responsibility for the actual process of selection, however, may rest with the executive director or head worker, or with a board appointed personnel committee, staffed by the executive.

A step in the process that holds significance for subsequent supervisory activity is the preparation of a job description indicating the nature of the responsibilities to be undertaken by the staff member.

Occasionally there is evident a lack of precision in the handling of this important tool at the time of employment. Many of the agencies under consideration are affiliates of national organizations which maintain personnel bureaus as a part of their service; when vacancies occur, these national bureaus ask for a description of the job to be filled, and this statement becomes available to individual candidates desirous of being considered. It is conceivable that when the staff member appointed emerges as a real person whose specific qualifications in terms of education, training, experience, and particular skills become known, there may possibly be need for modification or realignment of

some aspects of the originally described job content. Whatever the process called for, the really important thing is that the job description ultimately filed in the staff member's personnel folder represent agreement, as between employer and employee, on job content expectations; as such it becomes a central and jointly used tool in the supervisory process, and serves as the basis on which detailed work assignments are made and accepted, and evaluation of performance undertaken.

Procedures with Reference to the Recruitment and Selection of Part-Time Workers—Paid and Volunteer

Though the board of directors must be seen as ultimately responsible as employers of all personnel carrying any aspect of the agency's services, it is usually further removed than is true in relation to full-time staff appointment, from the processes involved in recruiting and engaging volunteer and paid part-time workers.

In some agencies—usually large—the function of recruiting and selecting these workers for service anywhere in the agency may be vested in one staff member responsible for this in a special work department serving the total agency; in other situations, and more often, a division or department staff may carry responsibility for finding and appointing such personnel, as needed, for the immediate program of that division or department.

Because the appointment process with reference to part-time workers merges so directly and so quickly with that of worker supervision, and because supervisors in the group service agencies are usually directly engaged in the recruitment and selection of such workers, special consideration

is being given here to what is involved in these particular processes.

Our attitudes will affect our approach. Extensive use of volunteers and paid part-time workers in the group service agencies is an established fact—established through the convergence of such differing but mutually supporting factors as these: customary usage in agencies with long histories; strongly rooted ideological, philosophical, and educational aims in these agencies to promote service to others as an intrinsic value and as an important component of a way of life in a democratic society; and sheer necessity, in facing both their own sense of urgency to extend the values seen as implicit in their services and the pressure from clientele and a supporting community, to multiply the opportunities available for recreational facilities and constructive group experience.

A treatise on supervision is not, in the writer's opinion, a suitable place for detailed debate on the pros and cons of this situation *per se,* or for speculation as to what, if anything, might conceivably change it, or when, if ever, and under what circumstances, change might come.

What *is* considered important is that staff now assigned to supervisory responsibility in group service agencies understand and accept the reality that introduces immediately, as important elements in the job, the recruitment and selection of many volunteer and/or paid part-time workers. Experience indicates that intellectual acceptance of this, solely as a job requirement, will not be enough if unaccompanied by self-involvement in understanding all the factors on which the situation rests and coming to terms with whatever feelings one may find he has about it.

What are some of the attitudes that may vitiate our ap-

proach? One is certainly the unexamined and too narrowly based assumption that *all* group leadership, outside of that exercised by the group's own indigenous leaders, should be conceived of as a professional function for which volunteers and most part-time workers are unequipped. The real world, with its evidence to the contrary, recedes; and we are left struggling with job frustration in a clammy atmosphere of constant fear as to what these workers, in their ignorance, may do. Hovering anxiously, then, we are in constant danger of seeing them merely as extensions of ourselves—people in thinned-out roles—and not as real persons with a contribution to make, within selected and describable group situations whose requirements they can be helped to meet, more and more effectively, by sound and imaginative supervision.

There is food for thought in a statement made by Mary E. Richmond as long ago as 1907 when, in a paper given at the National Conference of Charities and Corrections of that year, she said, "We hear much about trained paid workers in these days, but the supreme test of a trained worker is the ability to turn to good account the services of the relatively untrained." [1]

Some of us may be carrying around an overheavy load of vestigial attitudes about "do gooders," relics of an earlier era when all welfare work was done by volunteers; such an approach fails to take account of significant shifts in the thinking of large numbers of people about the seeking, giving, and receiving of services within a democratic frame of reference.

A tendency to think in mass terms of this large group of workers in our agency may lead to failure to see them as

[1] Joanna C. Colcord, ed., *The Long View—Papers and Addresses by Mary E. Richmond* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1930), p. 260.

real persons with individual differences in motivation, qualifications, and need for help; we may find ourselves recruiting them as if they were a commodity with a brand name—"the volunteers," "the session workers," "group advisers"—terms too easily translatable into just so many "hands and feet."

It may be out of this kind of approach that certain stereotyped attitudes have sometimes crept in, that make for negative generalizations which will not prove helpful in recruiting; we should kill a-borning any predilection to thinking of the workers we need as "all unreliable," "all meagerly motivated," "all narrow-minded," "all autocratic," "all self-focused," "all sentimental,"—in fact, *all* anything!

Counterbalancing negative attitudes of this kind is a frequently stated view, in these agencies, that we need to involve volunteers in actual program operation as a means of informing and making more effective the characteristic functions of finance responsibility and policy determination they may assume, at another time, as agency board or committee members; other views are that we need to provide as many opportunities as possible for bringing youth and interested and concerned adults together in creative group activity for the deepening of mutual understanding and respect; that to bring a goodly number of citizens into direct participation in programs of service, such as those offered in the implementation of agency values and purposes, can be a major means of enlisting their convictions and energies in combating destructive forces at work in the community, in lessening intergroup tensions and in promoting various aspects of the common social good.

To have any real meaning, obviously these ideas must go beyond their mere pronouncement; they suggest rich

content for the in-service training programs implicit in sound supervision of volunteer and part-time workers.

These would-be workers will come assorted. As has already been suggested, we are headed for trouble when we allow ourselves to think of the volunteer and part-time paid workers en masse, and fail to carry into recruitment and selection efforts a clear expectation of finding significant differences in motivation, qualifications, and need for help on the job; the individualizing process is essential here.

Differences in motivation call for special thought. What are some of the more characteristic motivations of people who, whether self or agency recruited, come to work in our programs as volunteer or part-time paid workers?

Genuine desire to serve young people in the community is frequently combined with the wish to be associated, in an active way, with an agency whose purposes and values are found compatible; the motivations of others may be more pressing and personal than these; for the student deeply immersed in a program of study in college or university, the opportunity may be seen primarily as a source of income to help support that educational program or as the route to a needed credit in this or that course; these are not negative motivations in themselves, and experience tells us that with sound supervision, integration of individual educational aims with the purposes of the agency can and does take place.

Desire for an opportunity to practice a learned skill in such areas as music, dramatics, the dance, arts and crafts, puppetry, or athletics—all so useful in group activity programs—will call for special consideration. What richness can come with the person who, with imagination and caring, can adapt the use of his skill to the needs of groups in

the agency's informal and voluntary setting! But what headaches can come without that understanding when, with perfectionist drives and personal needs for recognition, the interests and concerns of the group are lost sight of.

Motivation for gaining prestige and status through association with a given agency, or to be where Mr. or Mrs. Established Status Bearer is known to be giving service, or the relatively uncharted course of the person who rather casually comes along with a friend "for the ride," will also be met and will need to be tested for some predictability as to capacity for change and deepening of purpose. Experience tends to reassure that—given certain basic qualifications—tenuous, superficial, or self-focused motivations have broadened, gained in depth, and become service oriented.

The participation of a third person in the recruiting process sometimes injects problems into the situation; it may not be easy, for a variety of reasons, for a person to refuse to follow through on a suggestion from a friend or interested acquaintance that opportunity for volunteer service be sought at this or that agency; the result may be very wobbly motivation for the work itself; even worse are those not so isolated situations, where a board or committee member seeking, primarily, to help an acquaintance currently experiencing personal problems or deep frustration and nonfulfillment in his living, directs him to "go down to the Y. They'll put you to work; you need to be taken out of yourself. I'll speak to Mr. So-and-So."

Groups are pretty hardy and can withstand a good deal, but the possibility of ineffective work and unproductive experience, if not real damage at the hands of a highly self-focused and need-ridden leader, is one to be circumvented before it materializes.

A good working principle would be to ensure adequate

interpretation throughout the agency and among its leaders at all levels, of what groups' needs are, and of what it takes to serve them creatively.

Recruiting is done for actual jobs. Recruiting of volunteer and part-time paid workers should be for jobs that actually exist; hit-or-miss unfocused methods will not suffice. This is not to suggest that there might not be value in close co-operation of several agencies in putting before the community their need for volunteers; the impact on the community can often be made more dramatic and more appealing when a joint approach is made; the need persists, however, for clear descriptive statements of the requirements of jobs for which workers are being sought.

Under pressure to man large-scale programs, there has been some tendency to use rather wholesale methods in recruiting, but the "Come one, come all" approach may not, in the long run, secure the best-equipped volunteers. It is possible, too, that a particular need for a worker with special qualifications may get lost in the shuffle.

A good working principle would seem to be that a careful study of needs to be met in the total program should precede the enlistment of volunteers; "just anybody" will not do! Characteristic jobs to be carried by volunteer and other part-time workers should be clearly defined, and the descriptions written down; every professional staff member who carries any responsibility for recruiting should be aware of all the needs that exist throughout the agency and have full knowledge of the requirements in each type of job. This is particularly important in agencies offering varied forms of service. Most of us have met the baffling problem of "the volunteer we can't use"; we know that the agency's public relations are apt to be at stake and that they

may well be rescued, in a given instance, with a quick and intelligent referral to a job within the agency more suited to the volunteer's abilities; this will not always be possible, but the greater the clarity about what qualifications each job calls for, and the better the ability to describe its requirements in simple terms, the more chance there will be that the "No" that may be necessary will be accepted.

There has been heartening experimentation with simply written descriptions of the content of particular jobs —whether it be that of informal group leader, special interest instructor, day camp counselor, dance hostess or other; in larger agencies these often become part of a manual written specifically for the use of volunteers and part-time workers.

What kinds of people are we looking for? Faced with such a question there is always the temptation to shut out the real world and indulge in fantasy as we describe the superman or superwoman who never yet has been found on land or sea, much less walking around offering his or her services to an agency; two facts to hold onto in recruiting are, first, that volunteers are human beings and that second, they are seeking to work with other human beings. This desired relationship, regardless of other motives which may have influenced the act of volunteering, is what constitutes the setting within which individual qualifications must be examined.

It would follow that particular weight should be attached to such qualifications as these:

A basic acceptance of people in their great diversity; respect for them and interest in all that concerns them; warmth and friendliness in approach—in short, "a feeling for people." It will be important,

in recruiting interviews, to listen to how a prospective worker speaks about people.

Some maturity gained through facing and coming to terms with himself and his own life experience; how do his past experiences appear to the recruit? and how does he seem to have dealt with specific situations arising in them? The listening ear should be alerted to sense intense preoccupation with self and correspondingly little room and energy for becoming mindful of and active in relation to the concerns of others.

Identifiable constructive and socially oriented values that have become important to him through their testing in his own life experience; values seen as his own, but not to be superimposed on others, however appealing in themselves, or whatever the discomfort of seeing them noninvoked or actually flouted in the behavior of other people.

Some status with himself and in relation to others so that he does not have to be constantly dependent on the group's response to him or the group have to suffer through a compelling drive, on his part, for self-expression. References are frequently made to the hazards of the "pied piper" type of leadership.

Evidence of some capacity for democratic, nondominating guidance of a group.

Ability to make a contribution at the point of broadening a group's interests; background of education, vocation, avocations, travel experience, and learned skills are important considerations here.

Mental alertness, readiness to learn, and ability to take hold of new and fresh ideas.

Enough sense of organization, and the disciplines involved, to be able to work happily within an agency

setting with its requirements in relation to policy observance, time schedule demands, reporting, and general dependability.

Where can we find recruiting sources? From the point of view of results in quality of leadership, it is probably true that nothing quite takes the place of the deliberate spotting of a well-qualified person and the making of careful plans to enlist his interest and to persuade him that a job of significance calls immediately for a person of his qualifications and his belief in the objectives of the enterprise.

This method, alone, however, may not meet the full volume of need. While agency services expand, there is a heavy turnover in volunteer leadership from natural and perfectly understandable causes, and an agency may face a new program year with several leaderless groups and without time to use the slower, individual sleuthing techniques. There are sources to which to turn; many of the larger cities now have a volunteer placement bureau, frequently maintained under the auspices of the Council of Social Agencies.[2] These bureaus operate very much in the manner of employment bureaus. Applications giving full information about the qualifications and experience of individual volunteer workers are sought and filed, and then referrals are made to agencies in direct relation to the specific needs they have registered with the bureau.

Many agencies receive applications direct from volunteers or other part-time workers eager to avail themselves of the opportunities provided for service and experience.

Nearby colleges and universities should be kept in mind constantly as a possible source of leadership, from both

[2] Ruth T. Lucas and Helen O. Studley, "The Cities with Volunteer Bureaus," in *The Citizen Volunteer*, Nathan E. Cohen, ed. (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1960), p. 203.

faculty and student groups. An agency may find itself under pressure to make available volunteer service opportunities to students in undergraduate courses in education, sociology, or psychology. If any extensive program of co-operation of this kind is undertaken, there should be very carefully worked-out agreements with the school that protect the interests of all concerned; a distinction should be maintained between such a program and that involved in accepting students from graduate professional schools for field instruction as an integral part of their professional education.

It will be for the protection of the students themselves as well as for the groups in the agency if the greatest possible care is taken to assign them to responsibilities appropriate to their youth and relative lack of experience. The enrollment of undergraduate students should not be seized upon as an easy solution of volunteer recruiting problems. Actually, it will call for more time on the part of professional staff responsible for supervision, if the experience is to be a constructive one for the students and a safe one for the agency.

An important recruiting source, particularly in the smaller community, is the teaching staff in the public school system, unless current teacher shortages are resulting in overheavy loads. Teacher training has probably included courses in child development and materials that have deepened their understanding of the stresses accompanying the process of growing up and made them aware of some of the behavior problems rising from reaction to these pressures.

Some agencies have recruited volunteer group leaders from among the indigenous leaders in their own groups—young men and women who have assumed leadership, through election by their fellows, in club or council—

leaders who are themselves the product of the group process, guided by agency-provided leadership. Excellent workers have come to the agency by this route. There are some hazards, however, which should be taken into account in approaching this possible source; can the volunteer in question make a satisfactory transfer from the type of leadership exerted as club president to the somewhat externalized leadership role he will need to assume as the agency-assigned leader? Good transfers have been made, but there have also been rather tragic results arising from such a worker's inability to separate himself from an over-identification with the member or officer role in the club.

Churches in the community should prove good ground for recruitment of volunteers with strong service motivation; it will take discernment, however, to judge whether, in a given instance, the individual's motivation may get in his way as a group leader, and a drive to "do good" actually "do bad" to a group with which he is related.

Reference has already been made to questions around the recruiting to group leadership of persons with a high degree of specialization in one field of interest; the supervisor will need to keep in the forefront of his thinking, that the primary objective—certainly for long-term jobs—is to select workers for their potential competency in working with a group, rather than for any specialized knowledge they may have; there is little scope for star performers in this work, if we are not to endanger the whole process.

The right tools and procedures are important in recruiting.

THE INTERVIEW: The procedure most commonly used and the one upon which agencies place their greatest dependence, is the individual interview. This

skill, basic to many aspects of supervision will be dealt with, in some detail, in the next chapter.

THE APPLICATION FORM: The simplest form records needed factual information about the applicant, including age, education, occupation, special interests and affiliations, and any previous volunteer experience in a related field of work. This information, secured, if possible, ahead of time, gives a good basis for the recruitment interview.

A recent issue of *The Newsletter* issued by the Girl Scouts of the U. S. A. reports on a "Leadership Selection Study,[3] in the course of which reactions to the use of an application form, for volunteers, was sought. Reactions were varied. "Some members of Boards and Committees" had felt "that the urgent need for leaders made its use ridiculous." Others, including troop leaders, felt differently; some comments were recorded as follows: "If asked to fill out an application, I'd think someone thought I was capable." . . . "I'd rather fill out a form and be accepted than be taken as a last resort." . . . "It would be more desirable and businesslike." . . . "Why not? You fill out a form for other jobs."

THE JOB DESCRIPTION: The importance of this tool has been emphasized earlier in this chapter.

Actual forms used will vary with the agencies, but the common elements for either professional or volunteer worker, appear to be:

Title given to the job
Objectives and focus

[3] Girl Scouts of the U. S. A., 830 Third Ave., New York 22, N. Y., March 1960.

Specific duties
The work relationships involved
Name of the person to whom the worker is immediately responsible

The job description can clarify for the volunteer worker exactly what it is he is undertaking. The fog of uncertainty in which many able volunteers grope is, frequently, a top reason for ineffective work if not actual withdrawal.

Several national agencies advise their local affiliates in the preparation of these tools.

Much is involved in the selection of volunteer and part-time workers. Perhaps it is inevitable that in any discussion of recruiting, we tend to stay with general formulations of desirable qualifications to be looked for in any prospective worker to be employed, and to be a bit preoccupied with the means for tackling this important responsibility; but when actual selection is imminent and the need to determine specific assignments is at hand, it is clear that more—much more—will be involved. A later chapter will deal with some aspects of this process of assignment.

And finally, we are recruiting people. It ought to be unnecessary to have to remind ourselves that these workers are people; yet this has, on occasion, been lost sight of, and group leaders and hostesses have been recruited with despatch, and deployed much as the materials for the shop or the arts and crafts room have been ordered and dispensed.

A supervisor's first contacts with a worker he is to super-

vise will be influenced by the manner in which the worker was recruited; it will be important to help him know that the agency thinks of him as an individual, that he is wanted, and that direct help to him in the doing of his job will be available.

CHAPTER 6

Interviewing—a Basic Skill

(Note: The bulk of material in this chapter is taken, with kind permission of the Girl Scouts of the U. S. A., directly from an article written by the author for the Training Division, Personnel Department, of the Girl Scouts of the U. S. A., and published in the March, 1958 issue of their *Newsletter,* a bulletin for professional workers.)

A MEETING OF PERSONS FACE TO FACE" [1] IS ONE dictionary's definition of "interview," and there springs to mind the familiar stance of the two principals in the

[1] *The New Century Dictionary* (New York: D. Appleton-Century Co., 1948).

supervisory relationship, coming together in face-to-face meetings, as their chief means of doing business.

In supervision, early meetings devoted to recruitment and selection, and primarily for securing information important to each of the two participants, are usually called interviews; subsequent face-to-face meetings, scheduled on a regular periodic basis, for purposes of teaching and learning, consultation, planning and evaluation, are generally referred to as conferences. For the creative conduct of either, however, the supervisor will be drawing on professionally developed insights and principles covering all one-to-one, "face-to-face" meetings, whatever the purpose that brings together the two persons involved.

Perhaps it is because of the pervasiveness of this activity that the wish so often arises for a nice, neat list of rules to follow on all occasions. That it would be impossible to draw up such "all occasion" rules of procedure becomes understandable when we remember that interviewing occurs between human beings who bring distinct and differing individualities into the situation. This essential fact, along with the infinite variety of ends to which the process is directed, puts interviewing very largely "out of bounds" of any set formula, however comprehensive.

As social workers and supervisors consciously committed to furthering more creative human relations, we need to give recognition to interviewing as a somewhat intricate art to be learned, and to see each interview or conference as an opportunity for testing our developing ability to relate helpfully, rather than as an occasion for recourse to a bag of tricks—however smart the tricks!

This is to suggest some caution against any tendency to an overly glib use of the term "techniques" in connection with interviewing. Techniques belong appropriately with activities that can be largely standardized—activities whose

outcome can be predicted with a fair degree of accuracy; relatively few procedures in social work can be so standardized, and there is little scope for such standardization of procedures in the inevitably charged atmosphere of the face-to-face interview or conference.

The word "charged" is used not to suggest that explosions are just around the corner in every face-to-face meeting, but rather to give emphasis to an important consideration, namely, that no two persons who have business with each other ever meet solely on this basis; feelings in the experience will be as important as what they actually talk about.

Feelings are complex and they spring from many roots; in the interview they will be strongly influenced by the actual or, at times, the conjectured role and status each participant ascribes to the other. In some interviews the person being interviewed—particularly if earlier associations with interviews have been less than pleasurable—may see the interviewer not so much as a real person desiring to be helpful, but rather as a symbol of some power to give or withhold something he wants; it will take patience and skill to dislodge this image. To be interviewed by a person whose occupation classifies him as "professional" will be threatening to some lay people; similarly the "professional" may slip badly under the impact of feelings about economic or prestige aspects of the status of the other participant in the interview.

The setting in which an interview, particularly an early one, takes place will almost certainly evoke some feelings; it is at this point that we, as professional people, interviewing on behalf of our agency, should give some thought to the relatively advantageous position we have in the role; interviewing on home territory, in our office, tends to emphasize this since the outward evidences of our belonging,

our knowingness and our feeling at home, are all there; into this setting which spells our security, the other person comes "alone" and, at least relatively, "unprotected."

It has been interesting to observe that there can be a marked difference in the situation when, for example, an interview with a prospective volunteer has been arranged to take place in the latter's own home where her assumption of her more familiar role as hostess has tended to lessen the security of the interviewer and emphasize her role as primarily that of supplicant.

Obviously, the purpose and expected content of the interview, as well as aspects of the immediate personal experiences of the two persons involved, will also contribute to the feeling component in the interview, charging its atmosphere in varying degrees, and to the extent that resulting responses are positive, overcautious, fearful, or downright negative, affecting the progress of communication between them.

These and many other considerations indicate that we should think of interviewing and conferencing, then, not merely as a routine business of asking questions and eliciting answers to them, but rather, as an occasion for potentially rich interaction of two personalities. Responsibility for conscious activity to the end of ensuring meaningful and mutually helpful interplay between them rests with the interviewer; he will need to call on all he knows about the more characteristic human ways of responding to situations, and to set himself to use what should be a steadily developing ability to observe sensitively with eye and ear, to feel with the person being interviewed, and to understand more and more clearly the meaning of what is before him.

The writer has found very helpful in this area, a con-

cept advanced by Bertha Reynolds,[2] namely, that in every interview there are two movements in process—the movement of the business in hand and the movement of the relationship between two people as persons. Most of us can probably recall interview situations where, preoccupied with the business in hand, and enthusiastic about it, we have somehow, along the way, lost our human prospect whose noninvolved, monosyllabic "yes" and "no" told us something had gone wrong; here is an occasion for resisting the urge to "strut our stuff" about the business in hand and go back to mend our fences in terms of relationship; obviously we are equally off balance when we are getting along famously in terms of rapport and good feeling, but nothing of particular significance is being accomplished in relation to the "business in hand."

Though we approach interviewing without a set of infallible rules to meet any contingency, we need not go into it unsupported; rudimentary psychological knowledge will put ground under our feet and provide us with trustworthy principles for our guidance. If our study of these principles is infused with genuinely warm human interest there should follow a naturalness in our use of them and an absence of the stultifying self-consciousness that sometimes accompanies our efforts to make more conscious use of our knowledge and understanding.

How to begin an interview is a frequent worry. There is no set pattern for getting started; the supervisor-interviewer, as a part of his preparation for meeting, for the first time, a prospective or newly appointed worker, should have reviewed what he knows about the person. Such a review will frequently suggest a "taking-off" place, which, generally speaking, serves best if it is in an area of common

[2] Bertha C. Reynolds, "Dynamic Possibilities of the Time-Limited Interview," Tenth Anniversary Number of the *Newsletter* (AAPSW).

or shared experience rather than a precipitous excursion into areas as yet outside that of the interviewee; there really is something to this talking about the weather!

It will be well, too, to recall that although the purpose of the interview may have been clearly verbalized by one or the other of the two persons involved, still other, and possibly divergent motivations—none the less potent because unexpressed—may be present, inducing a process of passing without meeting until clarification acceptable to both is established.

In most instances, opening moments of the interview are best spent in getting acquainted. Rodgers and Hammerstein were obviously not thinking of the interview in our terms, but what better approach could there be than "Getting to know you, getting to know more about you . . . getting to feel free and easy . . ." [3] as a basis for continuing communication on a warm and friendly note?

It is true that on occasion, you may be dealing with someone who does not want to become too well acquainted, too quickly, and who will not share personal data until the usefulness of such disclosure becomes clearer: a more impersonal opener is called for here.

More has been learned about interviewing in social work than in almost any other profession; in a more than ordinarily useful book on interviewing addressed to that field, Annette Garrett suggests that for purposes of study, the interview be broken down into such essential components as observation, listening, listening before talking, beginning where the person is, questioning, talking, answering questions, giving leadership or direction, and interpreting. In actual interviewing, of course, no such sharp breaks will occur; the need, she says, is for the interviewer to "become

[3] Rodgers and Hammerstein, "The King and I."

conscious of the various subtleties in interviewing before he can absorb them into his spontaneous responses." Miss Garrett uses, as a vivid example of this learning process, the skillful skier who "is unconscious of the many movements integrated in his smooth flight, but who, earlier, had to learn them painfully, one by one, and then learn to combine them into a harmonious, co-ordinated whole." [4]

Let us consider, in a little more detailed fashion, and in relation to our particular focus of interest, a few of these essential components in any interview:

The supervisor-interviewer observes and uses his wits in relation to what he sees and hears!

There is probably no point in an early interview where the supervisor's antennae will wave in more receptive fashion than at the very opening of the conversation; he knows that it is a new situation for both persons involved and fraught with a degree of uncertainty, if not anxiety, for each. It is important for the progress of the interview that it start out in a relaxed atmosphere; within such a setting, however, the interviewer will need, without indulging in any magnifying-glass type of scrutiny, to use all his powers of perception to get impressions that will deepen an understanding knowledge of the person he is seeking to help or to enlist in the program of his agency.

It will not be enough merely to listen to what the person says: he must be alert, too, to facial expressions and bodily gestures and seek their meaning. Silences may be as vocal for his understanding as excessive talkativeness; in other words it is as important to observe what is not said as it is to take account of direct verbalizations; gaps in a new re-

[4] Annette Garrett, *Interviewing, Its Principles and Methods* (New York: Family Service Association of America, 1942), p. 30.

cruit's account of his interests and experience, or a closing up in response to a particular question or comment of the supervisor may be very important both for the progress of the given interview and as an indication of what kind of help may be needed in a continuing working relationship; obviously it is equally necessary that he use all his knowledge of human behavior to understand that person, who, in a first interview, tends to chatter; how can he account for it without being judgmental? Talking, like reticence, can be a concealment, a way a person has built up for meeting a need for self-protection. The person who wants to tell the supervisor all about himself in a first interview, may be withholding things of importance.

Feelings and attitudes will be revealed in various ways in an interview; and the supervisor, intent on developing his skill in observing will become increasingly sensitive to indications of ease or difficulty in relating, warmth or its lack, breadth of sympathy or impregnable fastnesses of prejudice, quickness or slowness in reaction, confidence or fear in venturing into the new and unknown—all important areas of needed knowledge. The interviewer observes in order to facilitate the progress of the interview, itself; he observes, too, as a means of getting insights for his own role of helpfulness in an ongoing relationship.

A warning note should be added here, about the ever-present danger of pigeonholing people too quickly; impressions should be kept fluid and open to the corrective of deeper acquaintance, if that follows in the scheme of things. Any tendency to a sharply turned "he is one of those people who . . ." should be cut off in its youth! It is just as well, too, to remember that this observation business works both ways, and that your measure is also being taken and filed away for possible future reference!

The supervisor-interviewer is a good listener and judges when and how much to talk.

A way to observe, to learn to know a person and to get clues on how to help is through listening; an almost certain way to lose a good prospect is through talking too much! Generally speaking, it is a sound principle to encourage the person being interviewed to talk; only so can the interviewer come close to his interests and needs, his attitudes and feelings; a simple, but carefully framed, question or comment, from time to time, will usually give adequate direction; obviously the "Yes" and "No" answer to questions cannot take one very far.

There is, of course, the interviewee who wants to do all the talking, sometimes to the point of consternation on the part of the interviewer as to who is interviewing whom. The interviewer may have to go along for the ride for a while, listening, to be ready for the appropriate moment to inject an idea that may get the talker to change course a bit. The important thing is to remember that the interviewer cannot abdicate his leadership role in the interview; when it becomes necessary to interrupt the flow, the person interviewed will feel less forcibly jerked back if, as the means of interruption, there is use of a point he himself had introduced—another reason for effective listening.

Not all the people we shall work with in interview or conference will be garrulous, and some of us may find it easier to stem a tide than endure a silence. Again we can thank Miss Garrett for a meaningful phrase when she refers to a need for "a decent regard for silences." [5] Uncomfortable with silence, there is danger that we succumb to the urge to fill it and, in the resulting chatter (ours this time!), run the risk of breaking a train of thought for which a

[5] Annette Garrett, *ibid.*, p. 34.

pause was needed; on the other hand, silence on the part of the person being interviewed may indicate an uncomfortable state of "no place to go," and rescue is imperative both for the relationship and the business in hand. When to listen and when to talk? that is the question; judgment and skill in maintaining a good balance is the reward for thoughtful practice in this area.

Questions and how to ask them are important for the supervisor-interviewer.

Obviously in an interview directed toward getting to know a person and discovering his qualifications for an important job in the agency, there will be the necessity for some direct question and answer. Miss Garrett speaks of the "fine art of questioning" as "perhaps the central method in interviewing." [6] Questioning that takes on the precision and repetitiveness of a machine gun can seem only like attack; what is needed is, again, a good balance, with the realization that too much questioning can confuse or repel, while too little may leave one without information essential in light of the purposes of the interview.

The supervisor-interviewer assumes leadership in the interview.

In his desire to provide full scope for freedom of expression on the part of the person being interviewed, a supervisor sometimes loses sight of the fact that it is his responsibility to give direction to the progress of the interview and maintain a leadership role throughout; he has to decide when to talk and when to listen; he has to be able to gauge at any moment how the relationship and the business are meshing and consciously direct his own moves in

[6] Annette Garrett, *ibid.*, p. 37.

relation to what he observes. Though relaxed in the expectation that the person being interviewed will, from time to time, take the initiative in the conversation, the supervisor must assume the kind of leadership that will move the interview along.

Timing in an interview and the effort to bring it to a graceful close, will call for very sensitive handling. It is with no intent to play with words, that the writer suggests that an interview should stop when it is time for it to stop. Foresight at this point has saved many an interview from drifting into inconsequentiality. Responsibility rests clearly with the interviewer. A summing-up of the main points covered, the understandings reached, and the next steps determined, usually serves to bring an interview safely into its terminus. Glances at one's watch or nervous gestures toward the telephone should be taboo; nothing can be quite so destructive to relationship as the feeling of having been left stranded by a person who has, psychologically speaking, already moved away from us.

All that has been said has been with the "by appointment" interview chiefly in mind; most supervisors will also be involved in "on the run" interviews; here the process is, of necessity, somewhat telescoped, and time for thoughtful preparation is out; it is important to be clear about the purposes of such conferences, with particular reference to the circumstances of their origin. Could an emergency have been avoided by more careful work in a regular conference? Could a short contact interview with a prospective volunteer worker be regarded and treated as, primarily, an introduction to be followed quickly by an arranged interview? Whatever the nature of the "on the run" interview, the relationship factor is still very much present; impatience or abruptness in such an interview can have far-reaching effects on future relationships.

In an out-of-print pamphlet on interviewing, collaborated on by several persons, Goodwin B. Watson speaks of the interview as "a joint quest, not an inquisition nor an imposition; there is little satisfaction," he said, "in reaching a verbal agreement; what we are looking toward in an interview is starting a process." [7]

In the one-to-one interview, this means a separate and distinct process with each individual; the more skillful our powers of perception become, the more unique each person will appear, and the more challenging our responsibility to grow in the art of interviewing.

[7] "Interview, Interviewers, and Interviewing in Social Casework," reprint of articles in *The Family* (Family Service Association of America, 1931), out of print.

CHAPTER 7

Job Assignment, Orientation, and Organization

SUPERVISORS WHO DEAL WITH THE BUSINESS OF job assignments year by year will not be surprised that in this chapter one of the emphases stressed is the need for care in the initial steps of assignment because of their inherent significance and their bearing on all the rest of the supervisory process.

Helping the worker to orient himself in his job is essential, too, in establishing a sound pattern and tone for the continuing supervisory relationship.

Further, the need to help a worker get organized in his job and to bear in mind that it is a person who is being organized, not things, is very great. The basic intent is to relate a worker's positive motivation and concern for people, his natural abilities, knowledge, and learned skills, to the organizational functioning of the agency.

These three responsibilities of supervision are detailed in this chapter.

Job Assignment

As suggested earlier, the major job responsibilities of a new full-time staff member are usually established at the time of his appointment to fill a vacancy whose requirements are known in fairly precise terms; his supervisor, quite frequently, has not played an active part in this employment process and first enters the situation when he moves in to help the staff member organize his job in terms of the specific assignments it involves. Consideration of assignments in relation to full-time staff will, therefore, be dealt with in a later section of this chapter devoted to job organization.

Volunteers and paid part-time workers. In relation to volunteer and other part-time workers, the supervisor has usually been in the situation from the beginning and has, more probably than not, been actively involved in the recruitment, selection, and employment of the workers he is to supervise.

The usual job for which these workers have been selected is that of group leadership.

In Chapter 5 there was a listing of qualifications it would be well to have in mind in recruiting for this particular responsibility. Faced, now, with the necessity of assigning real people to the leadership of real groups, there will be

a need to think, in very individual terms, about the degree to which given workers meet these qualifications, and to consider carefully how strength in this respect, or less strength in that, should be weighed in assigning them to groups, that will, themselves, differ in their leadership needs.

Hopefully, these workers have met, in every instance, the basic requirements of warm and friendly acceptance of people, respect for their needs and interests, and genuine desire to serve them; beyond this, in the fact of wide diversity in background, age, and life experience, differences in current capability will show up, with reference to other desirable qualifications for group leadership, and to the precise demands of particular groups.

The matching of long-term workers and groups is most likely to be successful in the agency in which there are well-established procedures for sound program planning from one year to the next; this process involves the deliberation of full-time staff as a whole, or in the very large agency, of unit staffs in the parts. Such planning usually comes in the late spring, before summer program sets in; in such agencies summer program plans have usually started in the winter months, and their execution is well under way before analysis and evaluation of the year-round program is feasible or desirable.

The writer believes that an essential tool in such an evaluative and planning process is a recorded, clearly formulated, and realistic statement of agency objective for every group served; modification of or additions to this statement of objective should depend heavily on the immediately related supervisor's year-end diagnostic summary of the group, based on his knowledge of it through continuous contact with its direct leader and access to all recordings about it.

Such a differential approach to determining objectives for groups presupposes clear recognition of the great variation in the psychosocial situations from which and with which group members may approach the agency and of corresponding differences, therefore, in the nature and intensity of their individual and group concerns and needs.

An agency desiring to meet in significant fashion, a wide range of situational need, will be under the necessity of providing group services that will differ in scope, content, and methods of approach; this, in turn, will necessitate selection of group leadership that will differ accordingly in equipment of training and experience.

With such an intent, and resources with which to implement it, there would, undoubtedly, be decisions in relation to particular groups where because of a deep-seated problem, there is an indicated need for professional-level service, to assign to them, as direct leaders, only professionally trained staff. Without adequate resources in professionally trained manpower, regardless of desire, there would be serious question as to whether provision of services for such groups should be attempted. In situations of such compelling need an agency may well be under the necessity of sharply limiting the scope of total group coverage in order to release time of appropriately trained professional staff to work directly with particularly needful groups.

Outside of such groups there will still persist great variation in individual and group need, and our thesis bears repeating: namely, that account must be taken of this variation in establishing agency objectives for given groups, and that these major objectives will, in turn, call for a carefully selective and differential approach to the assignment of their direct leaders.

In spite of our gloomiest pessimists—or "realists" as they

prefer to be called!—all groups in an agency will not be starting from scratch in the matter of leadership every year; experienced leaders, do, on occasion, continue, to the agency's profound thankfulness. On the other hand, and perhaps in the nature of the case, there is, in most agencies, a fairly high turnover annually in their volunteer and part-time group leadership and, each fall, they are faced with "filling vacancies."

An early step in the process will be to review the situation in each group to get an adequate picture of its needs for the coming year; consideration should be given to such factors as these: length of time it has been organized; current size, sex, and age range of its membership; degree of cohesion as a group; strength of its indigenous leadership; group interests and goals, and capacity for initiative and democratic self-government in pursuing them; particular individual member situations; over-all group problems, and the nature of worker-group relationships in the past year.

The extent to which the group's own goals have been reached and the agency's objective for the group realized, will call for close scrutiny and identification of major factors that may have stood in the way of their attainment; obviously the factor of its direct leadership is crucial, and careful evaluation will be needed to get sound direction for staffing for the coming year.

We are dealing here with human situations, and have no magic at hand with which to ensure avoidance of error in our leader-group matching process; it is to be remembered, too, that many groups are really sturdy, and we could, in our concern, become unnecessarily protective of both group and potential leadership in our assignments; these considerations, however, do not give a green light

for sloppy, hit-or-miss methods in the deploying of leadership.

Generally speaking, volunteers or other part-time workers who are new to the agency, and with limited experience in working with groups, are most appropriately assigned to already organized groups, with an established pattern of acceptance of agency assigned leadership, along with some evidenced initiative and ability for self-government.

Young and inexperienced workers have frequently, and with successful outcome, been placed, first, as assistant leaders in a group whose size warrants it, or as assistants in the more loosely organized group service setting of playroom or craft shop.

Analysis of last year's experience may highlight a group in which member relationships with a departing leader may have been such as to create real hurdles for a new and less experienced worker; if the situation is one promising real difficulty, consideration could well be given to the possibility of transferring an experienced worker with proved ability in handling relationship problems.

The particular skills and interests of a new recruit may, with a good deal of validity, point in the direction of a particular group with particular needs and interests; poor matching in such respects can result in real wastage of manpower.

In the nature of the situations within which group services are given, there will be groups in which problems of deprivation, frustration and nonfulfillment will harass its members; when a decision has been made, however, that it will not be necessary to assign a professional staff member to leadership of such a group, there will still be need for very careful consideration in the assigning of a part-time leader: to what extent may working in such a situation be expected to reactivate a worker's own personal problems,

so that highly subjective overidentification, or denial, or other patterns of response might result? If the information we have about these workers is somewhat slim, we shall have little means of avoiding such hazards, and, even with a good basis of knowledge, there will be risks against which there is no certain-for-sure insurance, but the situation is one that merits thought.

Worker Orientation

Understanding of the requirements of a new job and knowledge of the agency in which one is assuming specific responsibility do not come automatically with verbal or written agreement on the terms of employment; neither will they come through five easy lessons, nor, without cost to worker and agency, through a slow process of osmosis, on an exclusively trial-and-error basis in which the worker has been left too largely on his own.

A worker's sense of need for help is apt to be particularly pressing in his first days on the job; when, in retrospect, he can look back on that period with warm feelings of appreciation for the efforts of a supervisor, who, in his terms, "helped him when he most needed it," he realizes more fully the value of responsible supervision.

In his Foreword to the writer's earlier book on Supervision, Walter Kindelsperger warned that "where formal and consciously planned supervision is lacking in the agency structure we inevitably find an informal system at work" because of "needs inherent in work situations." [1] Such an informal system tends to be in very active operation in relation to new workers and, without agency intervention and careful planning for orientation by the

[1] Margaret Williamson, *Supervision—Principles and Methods* (New York: Association Press, 1950), p. vii. Out of print.

responsible supervisor, counseling by the undesignated and undelegated—however well-meaning in intent—can lead astray rather than help.

The most startling instance of lack of either structured or informal helpfulness to a new staff member that the writer has ever heard of came to her attention many years ago: after somewhat perfunctory salutations to a new physical education director—travel weary after a cross-country bus trip—an agency executive is reported to have reached out to a nearby board, plucked off a dangling key, and proffered it to the new recruit with a hearty "Here you are, Sister, it's all yours!" It was the key to the swimming pool, and the suggestion altogether too suggestive!

What specifics should enter into the orientation program of new workers will depend a good deal on the nature of the agency and the program it is maintaining. There are, however, certain areas of needed information and knowledge that seem to stay constant for various types of workers in most of the group service agencies.

Orientation of Full-Time Staff. The first weeks on a full-time job are quite crucial; yet, too often, a new staff member, perhaps because he is around all the time and "seems busy" is, possibly, not so highlighted as a group of new volunteers might be, and there is a tendency to leave him to his own devices, with a kind of assumption that he will get on board and latch onto what he needs to know about the agency's operation and his own place in it.

Of course, a reverse situation can also be found, where a new staff member is so nursed along, at every turn, as to be positively suffocated by this well-meaning hovering; the need—isn't it always so?—is for a good healthy balance.

His supervisor's program for his orientation—all with a

primary emphasis on helping him feel at home, wanted, and welcome—could well include the following elements:

a. In the interest of interpreting the agency, first, as people, *introduction of the new worker to fellow staff members, and clerical and maintenance personnel,* with explanation of how he is related to them within the agency's structure and procedural arrangements. Where board and committee members frequent the agency, the new staff member should be helped to meet them and to identify the particular responsibilities they carry.

b. Where program is centered in a building, *an early opportunity for the new staff member to become well acquainted with its physical lay-out, and information given him as to the customary assignment of its facilities to groups and other program activities.* To know where to find the people responsible for such supporting services as supplies and petty cash, clerical facilities and building maintenance, mailing and all forms of mechanical communication, reports and files, reception and public relations will be as important as to know the exact location of the property closet and other caches of program equipment and resources.

c. *Help in mastering the agency's day-by-day procedures.* Miss Reynolds speaks of this early period in the new situation, when the worker is unable, yet, to make full and creative use of his energies and intelligence, as "the optimum learning period for the routine parts of the job which are the ones most standardized and laid down by authority." [2] It will be important for the worker to know the agency's provisions for professional and private use of the telephone; how to requisition supplies; the handling of

[2] Bertha C. Reynolds, *Learning and Teaching in Social Work* (New York: Rinehart & Company, Inc., 1942), p. 221.

petty cash; use of clerical services; regulations with regard to use and care of rooms and equipment; signing "in" and "out" requirements, and personal arrangements having to do with salary payments, observation of holidays and other matters; these may all be areas for quickly needed information.

d. *Such information, as is immediately necessary on the job, about the agency, its purposes, program and basis of support, its structure, lines of communication and general policies.* There should be enough help, here, to make the new worker comfortable in the sense of having at hand needed points of reference, but not so much material as to overwhelm him; simple verbal interpretation of essentials will be vastly more helpful than the tons of reading material too often thrown at his defenseless head.

e. *Introduction to the community, and the major factors in it directly affecting the agency and its program.* The agency's place in the community's co-ordinated structure of social welfare activities will need explanation. There should be a plan for taking the worker into the community, and no opportunity missed for his early attendance at appropriate meetings and consultations. Generally speaking, direct acquaintance will take him farther and faster than reading long survey reports; any recent dramatic changes in community life should be quickly signalized for him.

In the large agency, where at a given moment, there may be several new staff members, a more formal and group-focused plan for orientation, in which other members of the staff and board participate, may be needed; in the last analysis, however, appropriation and integration of the new knowledge will come most readily in individual conference with the supervisor and, in most instances, the

conference will provide the major setting for orientation of new staff.

Orientation of Volunteer and Other Part-Time Group Leaders. Because the supervisor is usually involved with numbers here, group meetings for orientation purposes may be a necessary and desirable first step; there are important common elements in the jobs such workers are undertaking, regardless of the particular unit or division to which they may be assigned, and there is a distinct advantage to individual workers in hearing the same things in the same place; they tend to feel less isolated when they can visualize themselves as part of a significant group, drawn from the community, to serve in an agency which has respect for the contribution they can make.

Several national group service agencies prescribe, for their local affiliates, quite formalized plans for pre-service training of their new volunteer group leaders; in these training projects which cover a week or more of intensive work, the new recruits are involved, under the leadership of agency staff, experienced volunteers, and outside resources, in sessions on the agency's philosophy, structure, and ways of work; community factors influencing the constituency and agency program; basic subject matter on developmental processes of childhood, adolescence, and youth, as well as workshop periods for training in program skills.

Other agencies provide a briefer period for orientation group meetings, but frequently they institute weekly workshop sessions for the learning of skills to cover a fairly extensive period; they also plan for periodic intensive in-service training sessions during the year.

Agencies in the second category are usually those who provide for the direct supervision of all volunteer workers

by professional staff, and set up a supervisory program which includes, on a regular periodic basis, individual conferences and group meetings.

Early meetings for orientation purposes should provide simple, clear material on the agency, its philosophical approach to the giving of services and factual information about major aspects of its program; there should also be information about the basic needs and interests of the people using the services and a pointing up of cardinal points in the agency's ways of attempting to meet those needs; some attention to the pressures of community factors on the lives of children, adolescents, youth, and adults will help to establish the relation between services offered and basic needs. Audio-visual media have been used very successfully to convey some of this needed background knowledge.

Anxiety in relation to the responsibilities involved in working directly with a group can be appreciably allayed by the giving of practical help on such routine and procedural matters as the following: the need to understand the role of people to whom they will be directly related, whether at the reception desk, the business or maintenance office, or in the craft shop or play area; where to turn for supplies, for help on lights and equipment; how to report an accident and where to locate a first aid kit; how to track down the address of an absent group member; where to file group attendance sheets and other records; and where and how to receive his pay if he is a paid worker.

If the agency provides a Workers' Manual, it becomes a primary tool for introduction to such matters, but imagination will have to be used to make its contents come alive and appear serviceable for immediate need; just reading it may not suffice.

Exclusive dependence on group meetings may not meet

all needs; it seems of paramount importance that supervisors be accessible, physically and psychologically, to be approached readily and comfortably by individual workers needing further explanation or help on something they "couldn't find in the manual."

There are many personal and human implications for all new workers in this period of needed orientation: implications of anxiety and fear of making mistakes through ignorance; sense of urgency "to get going"; personal problems for some in the search for a place to live, or needed adjustments in family or other living arrangements to make it possible to undertake the job; as well as the imminent pressures of the job itself—"What will 'they' be like?" "Will 'they' like me" "Was I sensible in getting myself involved in this?"—here are feelings none the less potent because usually unarticulated, and the supervisor's receiving set should be in good working order if he is to be truly "there" when and where he is needed.

Job Organization

Unlike the characteristic jobs of volunteer and other part-time workers, a full-time staff job—particularly in a multifunctional agency—will almost inevitably include a variety of work responsibilities with a correspondingly wide array of relatonships.

This brief material on job organization is, therefore, directed, primarily, to the supervisor of a full-time staff member as he assumes responsibility for helping the new staff member organize himself, his skills and abilities, within the requirements of, and time allotted for, the carrying of his total job.

Miss Reynolds sees as "the test of an organization . . . the clarity with which its purpose and function have been visualized, the adaptability of its structure to its purpose as

the latter is carried out through changing conditions, and *the skill with which the human members of it are fitted into the whole*" [3] (writer's italics).

With such a charter for his activity, the supervisor will need to see that organization of a given job involves defining it and tailoring it with reference to a real person and then helping that person to so organize himself in relation to its demands that he comes to grips, realistically, with its total content and responsibilities with minimum wastage of precious energy and with maximum productivity and satisfaction.

Presumably a written job description has listed, possibly in not more than outline form, what the worker will be expected to do. What these responsibilities entail, how they relate to each other and to the over-all purpose and function of the agency and to the responsibilities carried by other staff members, will need to be very clear if the worker is not to plunge ahead in a fragmented approach—busy now with a bit of this, and then with a bit of that.

Identification of the major strands of job function will provide for a necessary integration of its various activities.

It has already been suggested that the orientation period affords a useful time for gaining mastery of some of the routine aspects of the job; the worker may need help, however, to keep these procedures constantly related to agency objectives and total program if they are not to be used, by some workers, as a defense against learning and doing anything else! With such routine aspects mastered, the worker will be freer to use his energies on more complicated and demanding matters.

Help in gaining clarity about the limits of his responsibility will be important if he is to be relieved from an

[3] Bertha C. Reynolds, *ibid.*, p. 34.

overwhelming sense of individual responsibility; when no limits are set, the strain can be very great.

Areas in which these limits are apt to occur are the following: matters of agency policy and procedures; the seat of final decision; decision and action where he has freedom of judgment, with the resources available to him, for consultation, in situations where he is unsure, and what support he can expect from the administrative structure of the agency.

The supervisor's own attitudes toward administration will be important here: if he tends to see administration as a lower order of activity, his interpretation of its requirements may suggest something rigid and arbitrary rather than as a framework to be used responsibly by staff for gaining perspective, direction, and sense of support. At the same time they should be helped to see it as a means, itself subject to change through joint planning of staff and board, when aspects of its provisions no longer serve agency purposes usefully.

Tentative time requirements for different aspects of the job will need to be set, with direct reference to local conditions, including methods of transportation; these may call for modification as the staff member's tempo of work becomes apparent.

Faced with many demands, all of seeming equal validity, there will be need for help in setting up criteria for decision, when selection has to be made; the breaking down of a situation into its constituent elements may help in the establishing of priorities as to where to take hold; it is frequently the totality that seems overwhelming.

CHAPTER 8

The Supervisory Conference

As the means by which integration and continuity in learning on the job can most readily take place, the individual conference is generally considered the crux of the supervisory process.

It was suggested earlier that since the tutorial pattern of this educational means brings two persons into close face-to-face contact, the relationship developing between them will be a factor of strong influence on the processes of learning and teaching in which they are engaged.

Social work demands of all its practitioners, as a means of accomplishing its objectives, a professionally responsi-

ble use of relationship within whatever configuration it occurs in their day-by-day work. In the development of its oldest established area of practice—casework—the chief focus was on the one-to-one relationship; it is not surprising, therefore, that more has been learned about interviewing in social work than in any other field of professional practice. There are rich resources of knowledge here to be drawn on by the supervisor, and methods to be adapted to his purposes.

It is expected that the professionally accountable worker in any interview or individual conference will assume major responsibility for building and developing a sound and helpful relationship between himself and the other person—not as an end in itself—but as a means of accomplishing the specific purposes of the particular type of interview or conference in which they are jointly involved.

There is an important principle and point of needed differentiation here: the supervisor in the individual conference—as in any other one-to-one meeting—would, in order to deepen his understanding of need in the situation, and to guide his efforts to build a releasing relationship, draw on his knowledge of personality and behavior and apply his core beliefs about the worth of persons and their inherent rights. The understanding so gained, however, should be directed to furthering the specific purposes of a supervisory conference; the person to be helped, in this instance, is not a client seeking help on personal problems, or a parent or a community leader; he is a learning worker in his own right, a part of the working staff of the agency. The immediate purpose of the conference is to help him in the doing of a job. Its content will therefore be primarily administrative and educational in nature, and the predominant method will be teaching.

Some Administrative Questions

Practical questions as to length and frequency of individual conferences loom large in the group service agency with its particular staffing problems and its usually limited number of full-time professionally equipped staff.

There can be no precise answer to these questions because of differences in agency situations; there are, however, some guiding principles.

The first of these is that whether for full-time staff member or volunteer or other part-time worker, *conferences should be regularly scheduled,* with time provided for them in the work schedules of both supervisor and worker; casual, unscheduled meetings will not carry the load.

In the case of a new and relatively inexperienced full-time staff member, at least one hour to an hour-and-a-half should be scheduled for conference weekly; if the thirty-minute leeway suggested here could be devoted by both supervisor and worker to preparation, the chances of full and constructive use of a one-hour-a-week conference might be greatly strengthened.

The situation with reference to the volunteer or other part-time worker will call for some modification in planning; recognition of the relatively short amount of time spent on the job, the more limited scope of worker activity in it and the numbers employed in the total program, suggests a need to plan for shorter conferences on a rotating schedule. Some agencies have found thirty-to-forty-minute conferences twice a month, when supported by a well-planned monthly group meeting, a workable plan; modifications might come in either direction; greater dependence on group meetings for teaching and worker training might call for two group meetings a month and one indi-

vidual conference; where group meetings are less feasible, responsibility for protecting and strengthening agency services through continuous help to the workers giving it, would require a stepping-up of the frequency of individual conferences.

Discussion as to what constitutes adequate assistance to volunteers and other part-time workers, on the job, points to basic questions facing group service agencies if quality of service and the "good name" associated with quality are to be protected: the too frequent pressures on staff, whether self-imposed or exerted by agency boards or local federated financing bodies, to organize more and more groups should be studied very thoroughly; it can serve only to make an already serious situation worse, if there is response to this kind of pressure without careful scrutiny of current staffing and careful speculation as to the needs, in an expanded program, in light of the known demands of the existing program of services.

Desired expansion in program that inevitably calls for additional part-time workers must be seen as calling, simultaneously, for careful planning to provide a professional staff, adequate in numbers and competence in supervision, to meet the enlarged program; planning in these terms may well call for modifications in the existing program; for example, there may be need for limitation of in-take in relation to one age group in order to institute services to another age group. So intimately related to quality of service is this matter of total agency staffing that here should be no possibility of a *laissez-faire* approach to it; there are no safeguards in expanding program merely by a process of accretion. In every instance, this situation calls for the more demanding process of sound planning.

To return briefly to the matter of length and frequency of conferences, experience indicates, particularly in the

case of full-time workers, that when conferences are infrequent they tend, when they do occur, to get bogged down with administrative details; deeper values and complexity of problems do not emerge, and teaching and learning are correspondingly limited. There is a tendency, too, when conferences are too short, to stay on the surface of things and for learning to be similarly superficial.

Regularity and reasonable frequency of conference can be a bulwark against "crises"; these destructive interruptions are not necessarily unavoidable; when, for lack of early detection and handling, they mushroom into sizable proportions, the time spent in exploration and treatment of the situation may far outrun the time that might have been spent in avoiding it through the conference process; there are explosive elements in group life that can quickly get out of hand.

There is ample evidence that with a hit-or-miss approach to conference scheduling, the true purpose of the occasion grows dim in the minds of both supervisor and worker; and the experience, itself, proves less productive. The too easily accepted "lack of time" excuse of either can prove a snare and delusion, in that it blinds them to the important fact that the conference is a way of getting the job done and done well; the conference can, in fact, save time. In the week-in, week-out work of the agency there will be, unquestionably, a correlation between unimaginative sterility in program and a tenuous superficiality in the helping process provided to workers through supervision.

Where to Take Hold—Assessing Need

Prior contacts for purposes of orientation and job assignment, have, hopefully, given a good start to the process; the need, now, is to get a sense of direction for the weeks

ahead to avoid the wastage and frustration that accompany a purely trial-and-error approach.

Assessment of the worker's need—or educational diagnosis, as it is sometimes called—becomes a continuous element in the supervisory conference; it should be a particularly active one, at the outset, as a basis for planning.

Early conferences—in addition to the giving of direct practical help to the worker to get going on the job—should be devoted, in part, to estimating the level of his native abilities, acquired skills, and experience in putting them to work; to ascertaining gaps in knowledge and skill to meet, more fully, the job's requirements; and to getting clues as to the worker's characteristic ways of learning in a new situation.

In the case of the new full-time staff member a good deal will have been learned during the employment process about his abilities, training, and experience. His learning needs, in relation both to immediate job requirements and to his continued development as a professional person, will show up fairly readily unless employment materials have failed to reflect them accurately. Of major importance, however, will be assessment as to how a particular worker is likely to move into learning through supervision: Will he seek quite detailed help in planning before the fact, or is he disposed to moving in on his own, choosing, rather, to talk about it afterwards? Does it look as if anxiety, always present in some degree, in a new situation, will serve as an energizing factor, or largely as an immobilizing one, at least for a time? What will be the most constructive response to these and other manifested modes of learning?

Obviously, some of these questions will also arise in the assessment of readiness and probable educational needs of the volunteer and part-time worker; usually, however, less is known definitively about this worker, and the following

material on assessment, therefore, is developed with his situation particularly in mind. It is to be remembered, of course, that assessment is a basic process, and points raised can be applied with equal validity to a study of the learning needs of the full-time staff member.

What have application materials and early contacts with volunteer and part-time workers revealed?

What the supervisor is involved in here is studying the learner; he will do this the more effectively if he is relaxed enough to observe clearly and to be receptive to the clues that will be there, both as to the worker's needs and also as to the ways in which he will be able or unable to use the help the supervisor is so eager and ready to give.

The learner-worker is not to be understood apart from his background of life experience. No part of his behavior or pattern of activity can be understood apart from some view of his personality as a whole; he should not, however, be pigeonholed or labeled too quickly and, as suggested earlier, any tendency to "he is one of those people who" generalizations should be nipped in the bud. The immediate purpose is to get a basis for helping, and observations or impressions should be kept fluid and willingly submitted to the correctives of continued contact.

In studying the volunteer or part-time worker, these are some of the focal points to be weighed in estimating major areas of need:

His motivation for doing the job at all. Unconscious motivations will color the manner of conscious thought and action and must be taken into account, though possibly only speculatively, in early contacts: why does this person want to do this job? will his motivation help him or hinder him in learning to do it? If motivation appears a

bit attenuated or superficial, prestige focused or wholly mercenary at the outset, must it necessarily stay so? It is important to respect motivation; the worker has a right to it. There is a responsibility to safeguard motivation as well as to help extend and deepen it.

His natural abilities and learned skills. How will they help him meet the requirements of the job he has been given? will his past experience in using them set him ahead or create difficulties for him in this particular setting? The classroom teacher may have difficulty in the informal leadership situation; the trained expert in a particular field, with perfectionist standards, may need help in seeing skills not as ends but as means to contributing to group satisfactions and to individual development. What needed skills are lacking? How can the supervisor plan to help here?

Evidences of ability to relate easily to people. Are there marked differences in ease of relationship with children, teen-agers, or adults, or with persons of cultural backgrounds different from his own? Observation of his ways of relating to other workers and to the supervisor will furnish clues and give some basis for judgment as to whether difficulties or tendencies to withdraw are due chiefly to lack of experience or to deeper feelings more difficult to reach.

His concept of the job. What aspects of it are apt to tax him most? What very specific kinds of help are needed immediately?

Basic areas of knowledge. Against which ones can he be helped to develop skills for working successfully with a group:

The democratic process; can he risk himself in it?
Economic and cultural factors affecting group mem-

bers—community conditions and their impact on people, and evidences of any philosophical approach he may have to the solution of problems they create.

Understanding of agency philosophy and purposes. Has it resulted from orientation or prior knowledge? Is there need for supplementation here?

Beginning psychological knowledge. This is needed as a basis for understanding groups and group members as individuals, particularly.

General educational level. Are the worker's thought processes and reservoirs of general and specific knowledge adequate for enriching program in the group?

Approach to learning through supervision. Is learning apt to move quickly or slowly? How can teaching help be directed not solely to the indicated total need but progressively to probable readiness to use?

Establishing the Purpose of the Conference

Because for many of the workers involved the experience of learning through conference may be new and strange, it is important to devote some time at the outset to clarifying its purposes.

George Brager concludes his useful paper on "A First Conference with an Inexperienced Group Leader," [1] in these terms: "Finally supervision should be discussed. The time for the leader's regular conference and its duration should be told him. Something of the content of conferences, and what his role in them can be, should be sug-

[1] In *Group Work: Foundations and Frontiers,* Harleigh B. Trecker, ed. (New York: Association Press, 1955), p. 283.

gested. We should let him know that we will be discussing some of the things he does not do well, but that this is anticipated and usual."

A matter-of-fact naturalness in this explanation will go a long way toward eliciting a positive response and, quite possibly, to inducing a feeling of relief that he is not being left completely on his own to face this new experience, and that there will be opportunity to extend his knowledge and add to his skills.

The real danger, to be removed by thoughtful and friendly handling is, as Mr. Brager says, "that 'supervision' will become a professional concept with little real meaning, or with frightening mystery."

There should be positive recognition of what the worker brings to the situation in experience and skills, and assurance that he will be helped to use them within the requirements of a particular agency.

Out of this process of clarification, the major focus of the supervisor's efforts for all conferences should stand out in sharp relief; it will be to help the worker identify his role in the agency, with more and more clarity, and to help him acquire and put to use appropriate knowledge, understanding, and skills for improving the quality of his activity in his role.

Selection of Content for the Conference

This will be a continuing process, using progressively as a basis, what assessment, from time to time, indicates as priority needs, and shifting emphases in line with evidence of mastery by the worker revealed in recordings—whatever the form—required by the agency, discussion in conference, possibly some direct observation, and workers' meetings.

Conferences will move more surely when, in each instance, the supervisor has organized his thoughts about

indicated need and has assembled in systematic fashion, subject matter for use in teaching; he should be careful, however, not to become the slave of his own preparation, and owned by the materials he has assembled, so that he fails to move with the learner.

The relating of selection of teaching content to revealed need is a principle that cannot be overemphasized; a concept for which one worker may be ready will be meaningless to another if not relevant to the level of his understanding and tempo of learning. To trained workers who have gone through the process of graduate professional education, knowledge will be of importance; as supervisors it becomes secondary to the question of how to translate it into terms in which particular persons can use it.

The content of the conference, whatever the specifics under discussion, should follow a certain rhythmic and continuous evaluation process: What did the worker do in the situation? How did he do it? How conceivably can he be helped to do more effectively what at a given stage in his development he does less effectively? What actual new content of understanding is needed? How, given his present participation in the supervisory relationship, and use of supervisory help, can this content be best communicated?

Primary Methods and Teaching Skills

A teacher's job is scarcely begun when he has marshaled subject matter he may need; the supervisor will have to think about his own activity in the conference, and some of the methods he will use. In the Foreword to a now-out-of-print pamphlet, there appears this statement:

> As in other arts, relaxation, as conducive to an expansion of capacities, is the beginning of learning. This is as true of the learner who is teacher as of the learner who is just starting. How to relax and to help others to relax

> is fundamental to skill with groups or with individuals if one is to help in the achievement of self-expression in any art.[2]

A sense of freedom and relaxation on the part of both worker and supervisor is one of the most essential ingredients for a satisfactory conference.

Discussion, initiated by a stimulating question or comment by the supervisor or by the worker, is the characteristic method of the conference; there is need to develop a timing sense in relation to discussion so that it is used appropriately and not pursued to the point of diminishing returns; a worker cannot continue to respond, in a conference, when he has reached his limit of grasp of substance; there must be "food for thought," and the supervisor is responsible for bringing in new material. Though this becomes a situation for direct—so-called didactic—teaching there must be care to see that the subject matter remains well within what the worker can take and use; expounding should be seen as a stimulus to discussion, not as a substitute for it.

In any conference it will be important to keep a good balance between stimulus and support; this suggests setting limited goals at the outset. For the volunteer worker, the focus should be kept squarely on the group to which he is assigned and the needs and problems it presents, and on planning with reference to what the worker might do in the situation; there should be support for his efforts through recognition of the strengths he has shown.

Judgment as to how much to open up for the worker to think about at one time will be called for constantly; it will help to use what the worker says as a point of de-

[2] Bertha C. Reynolds, Foreword to *Supervision of Group Leaders,* by Margaret Williamson (New York: Woman's Press, 1942). Now out of print.

parture, and it will usually be possible to relate to it areas already selected by the supervisor as those of greatest need. The supervisor who is relaxed and free to hear and observe will discover that the worker is actually telling him where he needs help.

Comments on the Conference with the Full-Time Worker

Suggestions in the foregoing material on the supervisory conference should be applicable whether the learning worker is a volunteer or a full-time staff member; there is need, however, to point up some aspects of the conference with particular reference to the learning situation of a full-time worker.

Here the emphasis is on the continuing development of a professional self as well as mastery of required knowledge and acquisition of competency in the doing of a particular job in the program of a particular agency.

There will be occasion for helping newcomers in the field come to terms with the fact that programs of social welfare are operated within agencies in community settings and that there are limiting factors implicit in this situation. For recent graduates of professional schools, aspects of agency philosophy, policies, and procedures may seem out of line with what the profession teaches; seeming inconsistencies may bring disillusionment and hostility, and motivation may not be strong enough to carry the worker through.

Injected into conference, these feelings will call for sensitive and sympathetic response from the supervisor; it will not be the easiest thing to do, but it is none the less essential that these young workers be consciously prepared to work in a real and imperfect world. Immeasurable supportiveness can flow from a supervisor who has lived and

worked productively in this kind of setting without loss of values and with strong retention of faith in his profession.

For some "eager beavers," there will be difficulties around the "youngness" of the profession and its imperfections; relatively little of what we use as bases for practice is proved valid, scientifically; "Isn't there still too great dependence on trial-and-error approaches?" There will be hasty and fervent clutching of something believed to represent the latest mode of "good." Help in visualizing themselves as part of the experimenting becomingness of this growing profession can be stimulating to disciplined and less anxious thinking; other professions have gone this way.

Disciplined thinking and behavior is the primary demand made of the full-time staff member; he is asked to give up past ways of thinking about people, himself, and situations; this may come slowly, for, as human beings, we do not relinquish readily the relative comfortableness with known ways of thinking of the past.

There is required, too, a certain submerging of individual freedom that is sometimes hard for young workers.

At the same time that there is required this submerging of self, and a degree of individual freedom, there is also the necessity for the young workers to learn to think for themselves and to criticize practice, their own included; that struggle will be associated with these areas of learning, is a matter of great importance to the supervisor and one that will call for continuous development of sensitivity and skill to handle constructively in the setting where it will be most apt to emerge—the individual conference. A charge too often leveled at supervision of staff is that it creates unnecessary dependence on the supervisor, and this largely because there is a tendency to limit the work-

er's contacts in the agency to that with the supervisor in the individual conference.

There should be deliberate planning by the supervisor, along with preparation for conference, for progressive exposure of the worker to other opportunities for learning afforded by the agency and in the community; scheduled attendance at meetings not necessarily directly related to the worker's job; encouragement to seek out other experienced members of the staff for thinking on this or that situation; exploration of possible aspects of the worker's job on which he might be asked to report at a staff meeting, and help in preparing the report; planned attendance at appropriate meetings of sections of the Community Council or other co-ordinating groups in the community; these are all possible areas for experimentation to this end of facilitating the independent functioning of a professional person.

CHAPTER 9

Recording and the Use of Records

VERY LIMITED RECORDING IN MANY GROUP SERVice agencies, and wide variation in the practices of others indicate a need for comprehensive study of recording requirements in this type of setting, to determine—at least on a minimal basis—what kinds of instruments are needed, for what purposes, and with what provisions for their administration. It is an area in which one can, too easily, either embrace blind slavery to a fetish or throw out all but the most limited statistical forms, as unworkable.

The subject is one of immediate concern to the supervisor, engaged, as he is, in helping workers to meet agency

requirements, and under the necessity, therefore, of assuming responsibility for direct teaching in this area. The danger that learning workers start out with skewed ideas about recording is very real.

An article on "Teaching Recording" urges that in both classroom and practice courses, recording be taught and learned as an integral part of the casework or group work process. Miss Sytz points out that with the need from time to time to sort out for special attention certain operations, including, among others, recording,

> . . . it may be left pretty much to the student to see how these and other parts of the process are interrelated to form the whole which we call casework or group work . . . operations when they stand alone mean little. It is only when they are related to other parts of a process that they take on significance.[1]

A particular aspect of this educational problem is related directly to learning through supervision, and to the place which records take in that process, in the minds of learning workers.

Miss Sytz continues:

> . . . social casework and group work records are used for a variety of purposes: practice, administration, teaching and research. Although these purposes are linked, recording may become a matter primarily for instrumental learning in connection with the supervisory and administrative purposes. When this happens the learner may tie in recording with supervision and with the evaluation of his work rather than with his services to clients or groups, for the student tends to see the purpose of his recording in terms of the use the supervisor . . . makes of it. When this use is limited to the analysis of the learner's skill . . . or to

[1] Florence Sytz, "Teaching Recording," *Journal of Social Casework*, Dec., 1949. By permission of the Family Service Association of America.

> the evaluation of the student's performance, . . . he is inclined to continue seeing casework and group work records as material he writes *for* the supervisor rather than as *his* records for his own professional use in giving services to clients or to groups.[2]

If this is true of students, what of the other workers—full-time staff and volunteers—who are presumably being helped through supervision to do their jobs more effectively?

Recording by the Workers

Students have, at least, accepted the necessity for writing records as an important requirement in their program of professional education. Without this motivation, and with little comprehension of their essential usefulness on the job, the writing of records can seem peculiarly obnoxious to workers who see it merely as a time-consuming process superimposed on them by fiat of a person—the supervisor.

The supervisor, tempted under the pressures of his total job to complain that "he has no time for supervision" will meet the same "no time" argument from workers he is supervising if he resorts solely to exhortation to them to "write records."

As long ago as 1937, in the opening remarks introducing a study outline on record keeping in group work, prepared under the auspices of the then-called American Association for the Study of Group Work, it was stated: "The first step toward the keeping of adequate records in the group work agencies is the development of a conviction on the part of workers, heads of agencies, and boards that the time and expense necessary for record keeping would

[2] Florence Sytz, *ibid.* By permission of the Family Service Association of America.

be well spent." [3] This suggests that an agency can make forthright demands upon its workers for the keeping of adequate records of practice, and count on their co-operation in producing them, only when—

(a) it can demonstrate their actual use as tools in the formulation of policy; as an essential element in all planning, both in the parts and in terms of the total program; as a basis for periodic evaluation of program; as an aid in defining jobs; in providing materials for in-service training of workers, for their learning through supervison and as an important element in evaluating their performance; as a guide and corrective for the day-by-day efforts of all workers; as providing the stuff for preparation of materials for interpreting the agency; and as contributing factual data and basic insights to special studies or research projects either conducted by the agency for its own purposes or in co-operation with other groups in the community for wider use.
(b) it has instituted job descriptions for its workers that recognize the keeping of needed records as an integral part of every job, for which time must be provided in the organization of that job.
(c) it has set about enabling the recording process through the provision of adequate clerical services and the necessary physical equipment.

Broad provisions for essential recording and indisputable evidence of the intelligent use of records will go a long way toward establishing with workers, not only the

[3] "Record Keeping in Group Work," *Exploring Group Work* (New York: Association Press, 1937).

reasonableness but the necessity of the requirements placed upon them for the systematic recording of practice and the regular use, in their work, of recorded materials.

The concept of records as instruments for doing better the "working with people" job in which he is immediately engaged will still present the individual worker with the most compelling argument as to their usefulness and it is certainly the one to receive the greatest emphasis in supervision.

In those group service agencies where fairly consistent recording is established, records usually fall into three major categories: general administrative records, statistical forms, and group or project records.

In the first category, some will be mandatory, and their volume not subject to agency control; these would include reports required by county, state, or federal bodies, social security and auditors' reports, and in private agencies reports required by United Funds or Community Chests. Under control of the agency will be board and committee minutes, policy statements and records used in program planning and policy making; it is observed that too often, the worksheet type of record on which final documents are based, hang on in agency files long beyond their period of usefulness.

Statistical records of various kinds, the second category, are kept in all agencies; in minimum terms they cover number and classification of clientele, types of service given, extent of member participation in the program, and the distribution of finances appropriated to meet the cost of services.

It is in the third category of records of group meetings or interviews that a subjective element enters into recording, and the resulting material goes beyond the mere reproduction of fact. These are the records that in addition

to observation of fact, will include essential points in the thinking of the person writing about what took place.

The observation that the record is "the worker's tool" has particular reference to this third category of recording. Granted its ultimate uses for purposes of agency administration, the record of group meeting or individual conference becomes the worker's immediate tool in two important connections: first, when he writes it and uses it as an integral part of and as an essential aid to his day-by-day practice—actually a part of the method employed for doing the job; and second, when he uses it within the in-service training provisions of supervision, and with the help of the supervisor, as a means of direct learning for developing competence either as a professional staff member, or as a part-time worker with a designated, but not professional function in the agency. As Miss Sytz pointed out, it is important, for the best understanding of the learning worker, that these two uses of the tool be held in very close interrelation.

The reader is asked to recall points raised about recording in the first chapter, where there was a consideration of characteristic aspects of the group service agency setting as factors that must influence its supervisory practices.

Who are the workers who will use records as tools in the group service agency and what tools will best fit their hands? A significant characteristic of this type of agency, dealt with throughout these pages, is that in the giving of direct service to a great many groups, there is extensive employment of generally noncareer oriented volunteers and part-time paid workers.

In supervision, by design, recording by the full-time staff member—whether of a meeting of a group in which he is the direct leader, or of an interview with individual

member, parent, or community leader, or of a committee he is staffing, or of a full-scale project—is seen as providing a tool to be used in forthright fashion by supervisor and learning worker, separately and together, for increasing the latter's understanding of the professional role and mood, and for promoting his acceptance of its disciplines. The teaching-learning situation in relation to this worker is to be directed toward professional goals and the need for conscious change from lay to professional activity.

The volunteer or other part-time worker, however, is usually not moving in that direction, and account should be taken of the implications of this fact for the setting of requirements for records he should be asked to write and for the uses to be made of them.

The principle would stand that for supervisory purposes, a primary consideration to be given to all worker recording is its usefulness to the worker himself for both doing and learning. Where it is not expected that his work should be set at a professional production level, recording requirements should be geared to producing material that will give the factual data needed by the agency for over-all statistical purposes and such narrative accounting of group activity, and his relation to it, as will help him plan and give a base for joint study with the supervisor of the group situation; this joint study should be directed primarily to pointing up patent needs and opportunities presented by the immediate group and to the exploration of possible practical and program focused ways of meeting them—ways that will bear a direct relation to his current and progressively growing capacity as a group leader.

There is a trend in group service agencies that have given serious thought to their recording practices, toward providing their volunteer workers with an outline form for reporting on meetings, giving suggested captions both

for factual material to be included and to indicate the most useful areas for jotted observations.

The argument that a form or outline might be too confining or too directive for a learning worker seems less valid when that worker is a volunteer whose involvements are both more restricted and at a less profound level than those of the full-time staff member; in a positive sense, the outline, in indicating what it is important to observe and report, can become a very useful tool in establishing the primary aspects of the worker's role, a major focus of his learning through supervision.

To counteract any possible feeling of rigidity in an outline, the worker might be encouraged, under whatever narrative headings, to flit with the flitting of members' ideas and activity; reactions as they happened may be more important than forcing them into topical relationships: this also suggests care in the setting of outline captions as a means of releasing worker observation rather than confining it.

Help in conference and workers' meetings, on this business of recording observations, should be directed toward emphasizing such points as these: who came with whom? who initiated something? who said or did what? who's important in the group? who tends to seem alone? where do conflicts arise? what about the program at the meeting, not in great detail, but who suggested it? how did the group decide about it? how did the members respond? are there new ideas? new plans?

A worker should be helped to see that a live report will very naturally show conflicts and struggles as well as friendly co-operation; individual activity, sometimes of a disturbing nature, as well as collective activity of the group as a whole. The fear that reporting conflict or "trouble"

will reflect negatively on him is a very real one and one that must be dissipated if understanding is to grow.

It is when considering what should constitute the narrative, observational part of a group meeting record to be written by a part-time worker, particularly a volunteer—that a kind of paralysis tends to set in, and with it, frequently, a too easy acceptance of the notion that these group leaders "just won't write records."

In agencies assigning overheavy supervisory loads to professional staff, time to make constructive use of records for teaching is wholly inadequate and a defeatist "why then require them?", the corollary.

Then there is the agency, perhaps indulging in a spasm of budget cutting and staff curtailment, where, for lack of understanding of the purposes to which records can be put—uses that might well serve to jack up the budget!—recording by workers is thrown out of the window as an "expensive frill."

There is the supervisor, too, who is so gloomy about the quality of volunteer worker recording, judging them by unrealistic and inappropriate standards, that he fails to make use of what he gets and, worse, fails to assume real responsibility for helping to improve its quality within wholly realizable bounds.

An antidote to being in a continual state of frustration over what he does not get, would be imaginative use, in teaching, of what he does get, even if, at the beginning of his work with a group leader, that might be only a group face sheet and a weekly attendance record.

Important to the furthering of supervisory purposes will be understanding, at the outset, on the part of the worker, as to what the job is that he is undertaking, its significance in the agency program, and what will be required of him in doing it; resistance to recording can usually be traced to

limited explanation of its purpose, or inadequate help on the "how to do." If a part-time worker is completely stymied by the requirement and retreats to an "I can tell you about it but I just can't write," a supervisor might try writing one with him in conference, using his memory for the entries; the actuality is that volunteers will and do record, and that their recordings become more and more valuable as the agency's need of them becomes clear and the worker, himself, finds their usefulness for his own learning. This enviable state cannot be reached without well-focused teaching by the supervisor; a rationale that appeals to reasoning powers will go a long way to counteract the aura of mystery, if not threat, that too often dogs a person as he sits down to record.

Specific points that supervisors have used, with success, in introducing and demonstrating recording requirements to their part-time group leaders have included:

(a) the help it can be to the worker, himself, to relive the group session, to see what happened, and to support his memory of interests expressed, of things to do, and materials to assemble in planning for the next meeting.
(b) the reminder it can provide, of incidents, individual member behavior, or policy question for consultation with the supervisor.
(c) the usefulness of his week-by-week reports, taken together at the end of a program year, in providing a base on which the supervisor, with the worker's help, will prepare his evaluative summary of the group's progress for use in agency planning.

As suggested in the first chapter, the supervisor in the group service agency, because of other channels for knowing what goes on in groups, is less wholly dependent on

worker recording than the casework supervisor; workers' records, nevertheless, will highlight specific points for conference discussion and save that part of conference time which, otherwise, would have to provide for oral recounting of meetings from start to finish.

It should be emphasized, again, that the volunteer worker should be encouraged to use the record as a tool for his own work, but that this should be done with full recognition, on the part of the supervisor, that its use will not be directed, as in the case of the full-time staff member, to a conscious focus on the worker's own activity as a basis for accelerating integration of areas of scientific knowledge, professionally acquired, with his practice as a professional person. The line may get shadowy at times; a volunteer or paid aide may get caught up in the process with resulting development of career interest; in such a situation, requirement of more conscious analysis of his activity as a basis for raising the level of insight and appropriation of concept and principle for professional use, can be stepped up.

Turning more specifically to recording by full-time staff, it is interesting to note that as well-known an authority as Bertha Reynolds suggests a beginning approach to professional student or inexperienced staff member recording and use of records not too unlike that just discussed for volunteer workers; ultimate objectives are obviously different; in the case of professional student or full-time practitioner an important objective, as already stated, is the development of competence as a professional social worker.

Miss Reynolds suggests [4] that an important first goal is to help the student or very beginning staff member, to

[4] Bertha C. Reynolds, *Learning and Teaching in Social Work* (New York: Rinehart & Company, Inc., 1942), p. 239.

focus attention on client or group rather than upon himself; she suggests a need to avoid too much self-analysis at the start, or too much talk about "professional self," even when records show up, in what they include, or what they omit, lacks in self-awareness, and absence of professional identification.

There is need to accept the learner where he is in time and space, along with his lay attitudes, until the time when more groundwork is built in for working on them with him.

Further, it will probably be better not to ask for too minute analysis of his first interview or group meeting records; the suggestion is that early recording be used, first, to aid in accurate observation of what went on and that there be emphasis on factual data and on what both worker and group and its members contributed.

In light of the stakes involved in self-revelation, there will be need, at first, to accept, as natural, an inexperienced worker's self-protective forgetting to record very precisely what he did; it is important, at this point, to ask about it only as it becomes necessary to understand member or group response.

Supervisors, here and there, have sometimes asked students and inexperienced workers to record the supervisory conference. Whose interests are being served here? Such a practice would seem to evoke the same objections as pressure for highly analytical material before a needed focus on the group or other situation to which the learner is related is established.

Obviously, too, though it is true that evaluation is continuous, this may need, at first, to be chiefly a mental activity of the supervisor, without too direct use of early records for explicit criticism and evaluation. A tendency on the part of the learner to feel that anything he says,

especially when written down, may be used against him, will be a real deterrent to positive learning to record.

Recording by the Supervisor

The supervisory recording situation in the group service agencies is, generally speaking, as chaotic and unstandardized as that of worker recording.

Descriptively, this is the way it looks: In agencies accepting graduate professional students for field work, the school establishes requirements for recording by the field instructor. Few agencies, other than these, have established requirements very precisely. In the majority of cases no requirements are established; the matter is left to the individual supervisor to determine and, in most instances, it must be said, goes entirely by default. This means that there is no deposit of his continuous thinking, assessment, and planning, so important for his functioning in the ongoing process itself, and no written record of progress, so essential for ultimate evaluation of worker performance and assessment of group movement, as a basis for agency planning and policy recommendation.

What claim to a scientific approach to one of the most significant jobs in the agency does this allow us to make?

Certainly realism concerning the pressures incident to the usually overheavy supervisory loads and the limitations in time for even reading workers' records, much less for producing any of one's own, suggests a need to be scrupulously careful not to set up any plan for recording, in this instance, without relating it to clearly defined purposes.

Without the attendant assurance that would come with extensive experience with it, the writer still believes that something in the nature of a running "log," kept by the

supervisor, can be a useful step in establishing what is needed as a basis for refinement of our thinking.

By original definition a log was described as a nautical device for measuring the rate of a ship's progress. Originally it was a thin quadrant of wood—a log chip, hence its name; it was let out into the water at the end of a long line on a reel, and the number of knots let out helped to estimate distance. We know "log" today as the term used for the official record of a ship's voyage.

Can the idea be adapted to the supervisory situation?

Following a first assessment of a worker's needs, hopefully recorded in a simple statement by the supervisor for his own guidance, such points as the following—never all at once, possibly only one or two at a time—might be suggested for very brief entry in a log, following conference:

Learning need or problem evidenced in a situation, in its bare essentials.
Focus of problem raised by the worker.
Points for positive accreditation of worker activity.
Types of help given.
Evidences that would confirm or modify original assessment.
Specific evidences of movement.
Hindsight directions to oneself.

Obviously the idea is "one worker, one log"!

Recording, and the use of records in supervision will become a matter of conviction only as one keeps one's mind on the *reasons* for records and the *uses* to which they can be put.

CHAPTER 10

Use of Group Methods in Supervision

As indicated in an earlier chapter, the individual conference is generally thought of as the major method for carrying out the purposes of supervision. There is, however, steadily growing interest in supervisor-led group meetings of workers as a potentially valuable supplementary process.

In the group service agencies, the use of group meetings as a means for the in-service training of their volunteer and other part-time workers is well established, and interest in deepening the quality of this training program is keen.

There has been less focused attention, in these agencies, on the use of group methods in the supervision and in-service training of full-time staff members. There is, unquestionably, however, a quickening of interest, stimulated, in part, by reports of the experimental use of group formations in programs of staff development by various types of agencies in the social welfare field.

Of particular interest, for reference here, is the well-established and continuing program of staff training under the auspices of the Bureau of Public Assistance; project reports are published periodically by the U. S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare in a valuable series entitled *Current Practices in Staff Training*.[1]

The trend in professional schools of social work to establish more student units for field work in selected agencies —usually with more than one educational objective—has provided another source of impetus to interest in the introduction of group methods into the teaching-learning process directed toward the professional development of young and less experienced staff members.

Educationally Focused Group Meetings for Full-Time Staff

Confusion is sometimes expressed over the relation to supervision of the staff meeting—total or departmental—established as a part of the agency's administrative structure and procedures.

Differences between the regular staff meeting and meetings of a group of staff with a supervisor as an integral part of the supervisory process relate chiefly to group pur-

[1] *Current Practices in Staff Training*, a Series issued by Bureau of Public Assistance (Washington, D.C.: U. S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare).

pose, structure and function, and in light of these, to characteristic content of meetings.

The staff is primarily an administrative group and its meetings are planned with purposes other than the education, training, and development of its members; as an administrative group it is immediately next to the source of authority for program and policy determination, and its activities are executive in relation to putting these into operation. The primary goal of the staff meeting is action with immediate reference to getting the agency's work done.

When full recognition has been given to these distinctive functions of the staff meeting, it can be readily agreed that it provides an important medium for staff growth and development of competence, but these are, as it were, by-products, highly dependent on qualities of executive leadership for realization. The staff meeting, as such, is not a subject of study in this treatise.

Further, there is no attempt, here, to deal with the occasional locally planned projects for total staff study, enormously significant for staff development when well done, but usually less directly related to the agency's program of supervision for helping its less experienced staff learn and master the requirements of their immediate jobs.

The feasibility of instituting group methods into the supervision of inexperienced full-time staff will depend upon the actual staffing situation in the agency; as has been pointed out before, the number of full-time staff in the group service agency is relatively small, and the number of beginning workers, at any time, might not reach the proportions that would make the method workable.

In situations where there are several such workers, possibly assigned to various divisions or departments, and related, individually, to different supervisors, they could be

brought together in group meetings, with one supervisor assigned for a period as leader.

Career interests and sound motivation for learning, on the part of the staff members involved, would be an important determinant in a decision to organize such a group; without these, there might be question as to whether such a project, in light of the probable numbers involved, constituted a wise use of man power, and there would be need to weigh the idea against the possibly greater gains to be derived from strengthening the already existing provisions for the individual supervision of these workers.

A staff group, such as the one contemplated here, would not be very different, in interest and readiness of its members, from the field work unit of graduate professional students, and there is valuable experience to be garnered from that source. A pertinent report is that of Elizabeth Chichester in "Group Meetings as an Aid to Student Supervision";[2] in this material she deals with content and kinds of meetings, and relationship of the meetings to supervision.

There will be further reference to possible content for such group meetings later in this chapter.

In-Service Training Meetings for Volunteer and Other Part-Time Workers

Before proceeding to further consideration of the use of this means with volunteer and other part-time workers, there should be a word of warning as to possible misconceptions of its place in the total supervisory process. The writer has observed, with some misgivings, a disposition on the part of some agencies to eliminate individual supervisory conferences altogether, in favor of what has seemed a too hasty and insufficiently examined substitution of

[2] In *Social Casework*, XXXVI, No. 6, June, 1955.

group meetings—frequently under the descriptive caption of something called "group supervision"; these situations have usually developed under budgetary pressures when consideration of the cost in time and man power of the individual conference has been allowed to take too high precedence over consideration of its values per se.

In any case, the term "group supervision" would seem to be a misleading misnomer in that it tends to suggest a shift in the focus of supervision from where it primarily belongs: on the individual worker in terms of *his* need for help in the doing of *his* particular job. Even though it may take more words, there would probably be a gain in accuracy in separating the terms "group" and "supervision" and interpolating whatever words seemed needed to identify group methods as one, but not the exclusive, means for implementing supervisory and staff development purposes; group methods should be seen as a means of strengthening the total process, not supplanting it.

Whatever the frequency scheduling for individual conference and group meeting, the important consideration is the interrelationship of these two means and the need, therefore, to establish a sort of rhythm in their use so that the value of each may enhance that of the other and thereby enrich the total process.

There will be some consideration of questions of grouping, and content and methods of teaching, in workers' meetings later in the chapter.

It is the writer's belief that the need for close integration of individual and group methods in a total program of supervision applies equally to planning for full-time staff and for volunteer and other part-time personnel; it is with this view that the immediately succeeding material, on the potential values of learning in a group and factors

to be considered in use of the group process, is presented as pertinent to both.

Learning in the Group—Potential Values

Experience indicates that use of both individual and group methods in supervision can bring positive results; supervisors speak of the sense of support experienced by workers through group discussion of common problems with the "I am not alone" feeling it generates; they have found that in succeeding individual conferences, workers have frequently felt freer to discuss particular aspects of a problem because its general area had been dealt with in a group meeting, as one of common concern. Obviously, this suggests a need for very careful selection of subject matter for group discussion; it should not be left to chance.

It is evident, too, that for some workers—not all—the group may provide a more protected situation than the individual conference, and therefore its periodic introduction into the over-all scheme of things may afford some surcease from the greater stresses felt in conference; in the group, this worker feels less under observation and his individual performance less highlighted; assumption by the supervisor of group leadership, as another aspect of his role, may be helpful to a worker in rounding out his sense of acquaintanceship with him; the presence of the supervisor may come to be less disturbing, and conceptions of the authority he wields less distorted.

Problems unrevealed in conference may come out in group discussion; and it is a matter of experience, that once aired in a group, it is easier to pick them up again in succeeding conferences.

It is to be remembered, particularly with young beginning workers that there may be more familiarity with the use of the group for problem solving, than with individual

consultation; faced with a new kind of work, the impulse is strong to seek out others doing the same kind of job, to find out what they are doing and thinking. It has been noted, in the case of young first-year students in professional school, that learning, in the one-to-one setting, is the essentially new experience and that it can be threatening.

Account should be taken, too, of the prevalence of the grapevine in worker groups; the need for help is great, and an astonishing amount of misinformation and misdirection can get going in the pursuit of it. The importance of having this situation organized by the supervisor, himself, seems obvious.

In situations where overdependency of a worker has shown up in conference, the group experience may be a bit rugged, for it is not always easy to share with others what provides comfort for oneself; however, in light of such a worker's particular needs, the necessity of sharing, on the basis of common need for knowledge, and the further necessity of learning to stand on his own feet to identify his own point of view in the group may be salutary and ultimately constructively helpful.

The particular need of workers in the group service agency, whether full-time staff or part-time group leaders, to be constantly adding to their equipment in the area of program activity skills, points up an additional value of the group setting for learning. Carefully planned workshop sessions in arts and crafts, dramatics, music, the dance, discussion leading, and educational methods for dealing with broad social issues should provide opportunity, not only for the acquiring of the skills, per se, using the group itself as a practice setting, but also for guided discussion as to the meaning and appropriate use of such

program activities in relation to the varying needs and interests of the agency's clientele.

In relation to learning needs in areas of basic knowledge, and discussion of theory, principle, and concept, the value of the group setting looms large in the rich opportunity it affords, for intermember stimulus and the acceleration of mental activity that can take place within the process of collective thinking; with conscious intent to direct its use to that end, it will be found that sense of commonness of problem not only contributes to individual assurance, but serves as an incentive to work together for solutions; under skillful leadership the experience of learning from each other, as well as from a supervisor and other resources, is a very rewarding one for the participants.

Finally, some thought should be given to the value to workers of this group experience, in and of itself; as in any group, the deeper the sense of common and shared need, the stronger the bond that is forged and the greater the potentiality for the development of morale; in such a climate opportunities for stimulating the imagination will emerge—a process that may be harder to accomplish in the individual conference, focused as it is on individual problems and performance. The factor of contagion in a group setting may well become an ally to efforts to direct supervisory help not only to the enlargement of knowledge and the teaching of skills, but to the lighting of some fires.

The group lends itself to the encouragement of identification with fellow workers, with the agency and its purposes, and with the community and its needs; for the graduate student and the young full-time staff member, a sense of relationship to a profession is induced; for all workers engaged in serious effort to improve their services to people, the realization of belonging, as one worker put it, "to

a group of such fine people," brings a helpful sense of significance to what they, individually, have undertaken.

Over and above these possible values of the group meeting for its participants, it holds some special points of usefulness for the supervisor.

A suggestion was made in material on the orientation of new volunteer and other part-time workers, that when jobs tend to show a high degree of common content, there is a distinct value in hearing some things together, in the same place—that is, in a group meeting; as the weeks and months go by there will be continuous need on the part of all for sharing important information about how they may be involved in agency concerns and for dealing with calendar events and other agency-wide projects; this is characteristic of the life of the group service agency. The group meeting, in this instance, becomes a legitimate time saver, serving, actually, to free time in the individual conference for concerns of the particular group and its leader.

Of great importance to the supervisor is the fact that the group meeting provides further perspective on the progress of the workers he is assigned to help; from observation of workers as members of a group, and in relationship with peers, insights can be elicited that will greatly aid assessment of individual need and give direction to the kind of help called for; problems unrevealed in the conference may show up in what, for some, will be the relatively protected setting of the group, for others, a more threatening experience.

The need to keep the supervisory process, in relation to each worker, clearly focused and dynamic, is very important; in the process of discussion, in a group, a worker's growing competence may show up more clearly than in the conference, and the occasion, thereby, serve as a corrective

to a supervisor's possible failure to make necessary shifts in focus, in line with the worker's real development.

Factors to Be Considered in Use of the Group Process

How can the potential values inherent in the group situation be exploited for constructive purposes in teaching and learning?

Obviously, their realization must, in the final analysis, depend on the quality of the experience; here the supervisor is the chief agent; as in all human enterprises, the process will be good only if it is good!

A first essential is to be clear about the purpose of using group formation and method in this instance; whose interests are to be primarily served? Hewing to the line of the major objective of supervision—the development of worker competence to the end of deepening the quality of agency services—will help keep the focus where it belongs and lessen the danger that the edges get blurred and lesser objectives of expediency take precedence, with their frequent accompaniment of a perfunctory and routinized activity.

As teacher, the supervisor will need to call on all his resources of knowledge about the potential dynamics of a group situation; new factors, not present in the individual conference, will enter the situation—factors that may profoundly affect the learning-teaching process.

Intermember stimulus, mentioned earlier as a potential value, highlights the important factor of multiple relationships present in all group situations; the individual worker is now to be seen as a participant in a group of interacting members, and conscious use made of this interaction for the growth and development of *all* in the group.

Individuals in a group will differ in their use of the

group situation to meet their own drives and needs; in a peer group there tends to be rather free and active pursuit of individual ends; experience reveals that in a group organized for educational purposes, such as the one under discussion, the learner role may, in subtle fashion, shift into a predominantly group member role, not unlike that familiar to group workers in the organized club; struggle for status and jockeying for position may show up; rivalries and hostilities may be induced by the group configuration and intensified by the inevitable group pressures exerted on the individual member.

There may be ambivalent feelings about being there at all: on the one hand, a liking and a wanting to stay in the group; on the other, some fear of what it may demand. Important values may be risked in it; how safe can one be in submitting oneself to its pressures? The need to test out his fellows in this respect may well result in behavior that the supervisor must be able to understand and deal with.

Feelings of inadequacy in relation to materials being discussed or the tempo of the group as a whole, may cause withdrawal and nonparticipation by some individuals; others may react with disturbing behavior expressed in ridiculing ideas and heckling their exponents, whether it be the supervisor-leader or fellow members; isolates may appear and be rejected by the group as it moves on.

Obviously such behavioral situations in the group can create real hindrance to learning. Charlotte Towle deals, in illuminating fashion, with Some Typical Responses and Their Significance in her chapter on "The Conduct of Class Sessions." [3] In it she quotes Benjamin S. Bloom on

[3] Charlotte Towle, *The Learner in Education for the Professions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1954), p. 371. Copyright 1954 by the University of Chicago.

the negativistic student; Bloom is quoted, in part, as saying:

> One of the major problems of a teacher in handling a discussion is recognizing the presence of these hypercritical individuals as well as in avoiding being lured into spending a considerable amount of the class time in following the false scents . . . especially when these are primarily to gratify the needs for opposition rather than because of their clear relevance to the problems being discussed. . . . If their negativism can be turned to ideas rather than people, they may, by virtue of this negativism become highly creative and original in their problem solving. . . . To the extent that it is merely generalized opposition, it is frustration and tension producing for the individual and useless to the group. . . .[4]

In her "worth its weight in gold" book on *Group Leadership in Staff Training*,[5] Eileen Blackey has an invaluable chapter on "Interpersonal Relations in the Group." In it she warns that though a supervisor's "knowledge about individual personality and behavior . . . will stand him in good stead in his efforts to observe and evaluate behavior as it is expressed through interpersonal relations in the group," he must, "in addition, become aware of what the existence of a group does to the behavior of individuals; of how interaction creates patterns which range from simple to complex, from those capable of strengthening and enriching group life to those capable of destroying it."

Basing her material on recordings of meetings by group

[4] This excerpt had in turn been quoted from a paper delivered by Mr. Bloom in 1953 at the Convention of the National Association of Deans of Women, now called the National Association of Women Deans and Counselors.

[5] Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare, 1957, p. 98.

leaders, she found the problems of interpersonal relations reflected primarily in these areas:

- External factors which influence these relations
- Status as a factor in them
- Subgroups and their influence
- Affectional ties between members
- Emotional elements in individual behavior
- Leader's role in working with the interpersonal relations in the group

There is a clear inference, here, that to undergird our efforts as teachers and to understand more clearly and use more creatively our observation of interpersonal relations in the groups of workers with whom we are dealing, we may need to expand, appreciably, our knowledge in areas of sociological and socio-psychological theory.

It will be helpful to read Grace Coyle's *Social Process in Organized Groups* [6] and her later *Group Work with American Youth: a Guide to the Practice of Leadership.*[7] The papers assembled in *Small Groups—Studies in Social Interaction* [8] may well stimulate one to systematic reading in such sources as *Who Shall Survive?* [9] and Robert Merton's *Social Theory and Social Structure.*[10]

Particular strands to follow consistently and persistently in reading will be these:

Role relations in groups—pressure on individuals to assume and ascribe roles—indigenous leadership,

[6] New York: Richard R. Smith Publishers, Inc., 1930.

[7] New York: Harper & Brothers, 1948.

[8] A. Paul Hare, Edgar F. Borgatta, Robert F. Bales, eds. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1955).

[9] Jacob L. Moreno, *Who Shall Survive?* (Boston, Beacon Press, 1953).

[10] Robert King Merton, *Social Theory and Social Structure* (Chicago: Free Press, 1957).

who become spokesmen for their peers—aspects of leadership and followership.

Such important aspects of the group as size, structure of communication, degree of contact between members, characteristics of age and sex, member personality characteristics, habits and values, and how they operate under group stimulus.

The task presented to the group, resources for tackling it, and attitudes toward it.

The Supervisor as Group Leader

In light of the implications of factors discussed up to this point, some principles can be established for the supervisor-leader's approach to his task, whether it be in a group of full-time staff or a group of volunteer or other part-time group leaders.

Group workers, constantly observing individual behavior within the group, as well as member interaction, know that it is a process generally less accessible to efforts to influence and help, within the group meeting itself, and occurring between members, than when it is directed toward the leader in the one-to-one relationship outside of the group. The leader need not, however, be without direction as to what to do or without resources for doing it.

To be able to work together productively in a group requires that the frustrations and conflicts incident to being together, be of less importance than the need to be together; the group exists because of needs its members have in common; it will break up if the needs do not predominate over conflicts. Even when some expression of hostility is accepted as normal, question must be raised as to whether the group situation, under discussion, is an appropriate place for its release. This is not a situation that

calls for encouragement of expression of hostility for purposes of release and adjustment for the individual member.

When a group, so to speak, gangs up on a disturbing member, there is present a strong element of self-protection as a group, which must be regarded and understood; there will, of course, be need, occasionally to protect individuals from hostility directed toward them, but the constant aim must be to reduce irritation in the group, lessening its need to punish, and at the same time, giving attention to the individual in ways that will help decrease his need to bid for it; the continuity of the supervisory relationship will provide opportunity for dealing with some aspects of this situation outside of meetings.

Within the meeting itself primary methods indicated for the supervisor are these:

Keeping the focus on the common interest, on the *what* is to be learned, and the *ends,* in terms of agency services, to which the learning is to be directed.

Acceptance of ideas, with tolerance of the differences indicated; having respect for the thoughts and ideas of all but becoming the particular protagonist of none.

Recognition that negative points of view may be a sign of progress, and constant care to protect freedom of expression; as the group itself becomes more cohesive and reliant on the group's functioning toward known goals, it generally can tolerate more expression of difference. A light touch on the part of the leader can be wonderfully helpful!

In short, what has to be seen, is that the group, and what affects its functioning, are major considerations; individ-

uals are to be helped to be, more and more, a part of the group, not separated from it; for, in this instance, it is the group that is destined to furnish rich learning opportunities for its individual members.

Learning and Teaching in Groups—Content and Method

In Groups of Full-Time Staff. When numbers warrant it, and a decision has been reached by supervisory staff that their individual efforts with relatively inexperienced staff would be supported by the institution of group meetings, and the workers involved reveal adequate motivation and readiness for such an experience, there would remain questions as to type of group formation and the timing of the project.

It might well be that otherwise qualified, but somewhat anxious, beginners might not be ready for such a closely cooperative venture at the very outset of their engagement in the agency; they should not be put in the position of having to share on a relatively wide base, before feeling comfortable in their relations with their own supervisors and secure in a beginning acquaintance with the reaches of their individual job responsibilities.

In the material referred to earlier, based on experience in a group of professional students drawn from several field work units,[11] Miss Chichester discussed the relationship of their group meetings to supervision; she drew attention to the fact that because the individual supervisors had participated in the planning and in the meetings themselves, the students saw the meetings as an integral part of supervision, and the content well related to what they were

[11] E. Elizabeth Chichester, *op. cit.*

learning in their individual conferences; supervisors, other than the one selected as leader of the group, served in an enabling role and were helpful in developing areas under discussion.

It would be well to keep the primary focus for the content of such meetings on major aspects of the professional role in the group service agency, and on what is meant by a professional approach.

Because specifics in their assigned responsibilities may differ appreciably, immediately related problems would logically be handled in the individual conference; this diversity and the frequent many-sidedness of given jobs, suggest, however, that the group meeting can well become the place where all professional activity is seen and studied in relation to the agency's total program of service, and where, to lessen a frequent feeling of fragmentariness in the job, there is emphasis on the concept of the individual job as an organic whole.

Consideration of the basic values and principles that inform and give direction to the professional approach will induce cohesion in the group regardless of differences in job content and suggests the desirability of using record material that highlights the operation of such values and principles, as a means of teaching and learning in this area.

In this instance, records would be selected for their applicability to thinking about such matters as these: the inherent worth of the individual, the principle of respect for person, and the obligation constantly to protect his essential dignity and rights as a human being; the principle of confidentiality and the need for scrupulous care in its observance; acceptance of people as they are with respect for their innate capacities and their infinite diversity; acceptance of the right of people to run their own lives and

make their own decisions; recognition of their right to refuse as well as accept services; the need for a nonjudgmental approach that respects the right of individuals and groups to their point of view, even when it conflicts with the views and standards of the worker and with the generally accepted values of agency and community; the need to avoid superimposition of values; the principle of participation as essential in the helping process and all that is involved in helping people to help themselves; respect for facts, and care in their use, as central to the scientific approach; and the disciplines involved in the responsible use of relationship as a means of giving service.

Question as to the desirability of using the material of members for group discussion should be answered in light of the actual situation and the degree of security shown by staff members; it might be well to start out with material drawn from other sources. Miss Chichester was encouraged by member attitudes toward this question in the group she described, even though it was not always easy for them. There had been a process of easing into the use of their own material, and care taken, in a free and relaxed atmosphere, not to expose any one member to direct group criticism. Focus at first on situations and what they revealed, rather than on the precise activity of the worker, helped this process.

In a useful and relatively new book on *Group Methods in Supervision and Staff Development*,[12] Arthur C. Abrahamson lists twelve principles for the guidance of the leader in his selection and use of case material for staff group teaching; among the important points he makes these seem of particular significance for our immediate concern: that material be geared to the stage reached by

[12] New York: Harper & Brothers, 1959, p. 113.

the group; need for condensation of material in the interest of time saving; value of using material derived from the agency itself and the importance, in selection, of considering the educational needs of *all* in the group.

The introduction of recorded material into such a group suggests that discussion will be a primary method used in this type of setting. It will be well to remember, however, that discussion does not always teach. Such a group can suffer from malnutrition, and the leader should be sensitive to a situation where the limit of knowledge for discussion has been reached and new material, in terms of concepts and principles must be introduced through a direct teaching process; there is real danger of withholding—the more so when in other aspects of one's job there may be emphasis on a nondirective and more passive approach.

Obviously in presenting material there will be need to avoid "talking at" in place of "talking to" and "talking with."

In Groups of Volunteer and Part-Time Workers. Much that has been discussed in terms of methods to be used by the supervisor in groups of full-time staff will have relevance for the leadership of group meetings of volunteers and other part-time workers, but the necessity of bringing both teaching content and method into direct relationship with the characteristic nature and content of volunteer and part-time group leadership jobs, as well as to factors of motivation and background qualifications of persons undertaking them, will bring essential differences into the situation.

Any rigid formula for size and composition of worker groups is patently inappropriate. Decisions in these matters should be based on careful analysis of the local situation; important considerations, however, will be these:

Levels of experience and self-confidence of workers.
Relative values of a special group for beginners as against participation in a group with workers of longer experience.
Question as to whether the organization of worker groups should follow or cross agency divisional lines in structuring its group services.
With reference to size, the need to keep in mind that if the group is too small, the experience may be correspondingly limited in richness; if too large, problems of a nonparticipating periphery may emerge.

Frequency of meetings will also be a matter of decision in light of local conditions; the important consideration is that they be *regularly scheduled* as a recognized part of the program of supervision; their calling should not be left to the whimsy of the supervisor; the sudden, after-the-fact introduction of meetings as a job requirement will seem to workers like a sneaking-up process, and the possible response of "all this and meetings too!" not too unnatural. Evidence of careful preparation for meetings by the supervisor will tend to enhance the significance of what is to be learned through this method.

In considering areas of content appropriate for such meetings the role, in the agency, of volunteer and other part-time workers should be closely reviewed. Generally speaking, these workers carry, individually, responsibility for a bit of the agency's service program on a sharply limited time basis. With relatively few exceptions, their work in the agency is not associated with professional career interest in group work; they are further removed than full-time staff from the seat of decision that sets in motion the program activities in which they are engaged and less accountable in relation to total agency program.

As suggested in the first chapter, the nature of their relation to the agency, the concentration of their leadership activity, in the limited time available, on the more informal educational and recreational aspects of the agency's service to groups, and their lack of specific preparation for carrying this responsibility combine to indicate the need for a strong instructional component in their supervision and in-service training.

The workers' group meeting lends itself admirably to dealing with needs inherent in this situation.

If the base on which these workers were recruited was soundly conceived and related criteria for their selection carefully observed, it should be possible to assume a degree of readiness to move into a group-learning experience throughout which such fundamental areas as the following are emphasized:

Common basic needs of people the agency is attempting to meet and the major goals for its services in terms of personality development and self-realization, learning to respect and get along with others, and growth toward maturity.

Mental hygiene concepts and factors of normal growth and development, as an aid to understanding group members—their needs and their behavior. The greater general accessibility of material in this area through books and popular magazines and through parent, teacher, and other study groups, suggests a readiness for focused study and application that could not have been looked for some years ago; there is as much danger of setting sights too low in a program of worker education and training as there is of making it too technical in approach.

The democratic framework within which group services are provided, and the role of the agency worker, and his ways of work, in helping a group move in the direction of democratic decision making, self-government and self-control as preparation for effective functioning in a democratic society.

The role of the agency worker in building program *with* rather than *for* a group and in relating program activities to needs and interests at different age levels; workshop periods, as needed, to be devoted to introducing resources for program, learning program skills, and discussing their use, are indicated here.

Cultural and economic factors in the immediate community in terms of their influence on the lives and ways of acting of group members; how prejudice operates, and methods of dealing with its expression and of building for greater understanding and social responsibility.

Aspects of social education through which group members can gain in knowledge of broad social issues and find ways for expressing conviction, both individually and in their group.

Such a listing should not be taken as exhaustive, and certainly not all could come in for emphasis at any one time; the suggested areas, however, are believed to be basic. Most of the national group service agencies provide rich resources, in these areas, for the use of their local affiliates in setting up their worker in-service training program.

Though not directed to the training of people in professional terms this program of group in-service training

of volunteer and other part-time workers can well be seen, in and of itself, and over and above its immediate purpose in the agency, as a valuable program of adult education; certainly its quality should be such as to array it alongside the finest projects in that area in the community.

CHAPTER 11

Evaluation of Worker Performance

THIS CHAPTER IS ABOUT ASSESSMENT OR EVALUATION of worker performance as an integral part of the supervisory process. The reader is asked to recall discussion of the administrative functions of supervision in Chapter 2, where mention was made of a view that elements in these functions that confer on the supervisor a position of authority and power in relation to the workers he supervises, threaten unduly the supervisory relationship and the learning situation; obviously the responsibility for worker evaluation is a "for instance"; accompanying this view there has been speculation as to whether the teaching and

administrative functions of supervision might be divorced and assigned to different people in the agency; it would follow, in this thinking, that the supervisor responsible for teaching, would not be responsible for the evaluation of worker performance for administrative purposes.

It is the writer's view that to remove from the person who is teaching practice, administrative responsibility for defining the total area of worker accountability and for assessing progressively his developing ability to fulfill all its requirements, is to lessen the factor of reality in the learning situation. The concept of a job as an organic whole is an important one; it emphasizes the intent to hold together, as mutually informing and supporting, organizational operation and the interests, needs, and concerns of people. If, for the learning worker—particularly the full-time staff member in the group service agency—the job is not to become merely a potpourri of tasks, its full content, disciplines, and organizational accountability must be taught in and as an essential unity.

The material in this chapter, then, proceeds from the view that evaluation must be in relation to total job accountability, and that the supervisor as teacher and administrator, in close and continuous contact with the worker, is the person with the requisite knowledge and competence to assume responsibility for evaluation in these terms.

He will approach this responsibility with more sureness if, throughout the teaching-learning process, he has held together in his own mind, and put to use in integrated fashion, two major aspects of evaluation: first, that it is an integral part of the teaching function and method in supervision; and, second, that simultaneously, it should be seen and exercised as an administrative function whereby the agency's accountability to clientele and community for quality of service is safeguarded.

This will require that evaluation be given early explanation, to the worker, as a continuous part of supervision; for the supervisor it will begin with his earliest assessment of the worker's needs as a basis for his own planning to help; it will be implicit in every conference, following a rhythmic course of analysis: What, from the evidence, is this worker able to do in meeting the requirements of his job? How effectively does he do it? What makes him able to do this? What makes him less able to do that? How can he be helped, on the basis of his strengths, to a higher level of achievement? What basic knowledge and skills are below job requirements? How, in light of his pattern of learning and use of supervisory help can they best be taught and learned?

Such an approach will keep the process of assessment directed, continuously, to the worker's performance in a job whose elements and requirements are established and known. The importance of clear written descriptions of jobs as the only sound basis for focused educational planning and honest assessment of progress has already been stressed.

Without this framework, planning will tend to move on an expediency basis, or by hunch, with attention to worker qualifications directed in general rather than specific terms, because actual job requirements will be less determinative in the assessment process; the danger in such an unfocused approach to planning is that with the imminence of a set occasion for evaluation, job requirements will suddenly loom large, leading almost inevitably to the introduction of new and unfamiliar areas of inquiry, that can seem only like attack to the worker. Evaluation should not be an episodic incursion into the supervisory process; better to be able to say in an evaluation conference "you will recall we talked about that in connection with such and such a situ-

ation"—not to trap the worker, but to keep the process all of a piece and make it possible for him to associate with the specific, strengths revealed in the same situation; this approach remains the sound one, even when the worker's response, related to other needs he has, is that he has not heard.

Greatly increased anxiety and tension are the inevitable fruits of a supervisory process in which the authority and power aspects of evaluation have not been faced realistically; some trepidation, on the part of the person whose work is being evaluated, is a natural and to-be-expected element in the situation. The stakes are very high; look at some of them: recommendation or its lack for a school credit; continuance or termination of a job, with economic and/or status considerations implicit; for the full-time staff member, advancement in responsibility at a higher earning level, standing still, or even demotion; a chance, or its negation, for help on plans for further education. None of these can come through negatively without some degree of devaluation of person—a sense of failure with its accompanying lowering of self-esteem; values that are very precious to the individual are inevitably threatened, and this must be considered with sensitive understanding, along with consideration of the values to be conserved in quality of service to clientele.

For the supervisor it calls for ability to accept and live with the knowledge that the worker must identify him as the person who will continuously see him in his weaknesses as well as his strengths, and as the one having at least some power to call the tune with reference to his future in the job. This is no small requirement: the supervisor who is sensitively aware of it, however, will be more likely than those who turn away from it, to keep the process integrated with educational objectives; freer, he

will be the more resourceful in finding the ways that will be constructively helpful to the worker; for a given worker, anxiety need not always be corrosive; with the understanding support of his supervisor, a worker can be helped to use anxiety around evaluation as stimulus to greater effort or to the nondamaging acceptance of necessity for modification of individual plans.

Evaluation Conferences—How Prepare for Them?

Let us imagine a not too infrequent situation in a group service agency; say, for example, it is this particular agency's policy to evaluate the work of volunteer and other part-time group leaders semiannually: the work of Miss A has not been satisfactory; she has tried very hard to do a good job and has worked, indefatigably, to find good resources for program; but the group members—twelve-year-old girls—have not responded, finding her ways too "bossy" and controlling; attendance is falling off, and some members have asked to join other groups; a date for evaluation has been set, and Miss A has been asked to come prepared to share her thinking about the six months' experience. Meanwhile the supervisor, in preparation, will need to review all the factors that have entered into the situation in order to assess their relative weight.

Evaluation of a worker's performance should not proceed apart from some consideration of what agency procedures and arrangements, as well as the supervisor's own activity, may have contributed to success or failure in the situation.

In getting ready to talk with Miss A, then, and in connection with a seriatim reading of all recordings about the group, as well as his own notes on conferences, such questions as these should be considered:

How was Miss A recruited, and on what basis was she selected?

Was the group assignment an appropriate one? Might she have done better with another group? Was the group one that presented unusual problems for a worker of Miss A's abilities and experience?

Was her orientation adequate? What concept of the job could she be expected to have gained from it?

What direct efforts have been made to deal with her particular difficulties during the six-month period? What specific teaching has there been about what is involved in the democratic leadership of a group, the principle of participation—doing *with* rather than *for* and the need for encouragement of group self-control?

There should be objective analysis of such factual data as place of meeting and available resources, and consideration should be given to any factors, other than Miss A's leadership, that may have contributed to drop in attendance.

Direct focus on Miss A's performance should be within an over-all question as to her demonstrated capacity to learn and change. What is the evidence? Has she moved in other areas? Is motivation such that it will carry her over the hurdle of needed additional effort to learn new ways and relinquish old ones? How has she met questions about her work in the past? Has she been able to face them as real and calling for effort, on her part, to change, or has there been a tendency to project reasons for nonfulfillment on other factors out of her control—the group, the agency, the supervisor?

A weighing together of all these factors considered should point up specific areas for further exploration with

Miss A in the conference, in order to reach a fair evaluation.

It would be well, too, to think a bit about possible solutions, without becoming irrevocably wedded to one before the conference:

Does the agency provide service opportunities other than group leadership if a change is deemed necessary? What kind?

Is transfer to another group a possibility?

Is continuation with the present group a possibility with stepped-up plans for direct help?

If the situation should seem to call only for termination of service in this agency, what will be involved? How can the worker be helped to shift direction in the giving of service without devastating personal cost?

It is important to explore all possible solutions that seem to carry with them the maintenance of positive values; if termination of service is the decision, how can it be accomplished with a minimum of lowering of self-esteem and a maximum of legitimate "out." A tendency merely to "pass people on," dodging responsibility for being clear and direct, and for giving real support to a worker through the process, in a way that will help maintain his self-respect too often gives the lie to an agency's own announced beliefs about people, their inherent worth and dignity and their essential rights.

To move from Miss A in particular to some further thoughts about preparation for evaluation—this time, with a full-time staff member more in mind—suggests the place for considerations such as these: the need for orderly procedures, which are usually prescribed by the agency in its personnel code: Agencies that are affiliates of national or-

ganizations know of the rich resources available to them in this area, in their national personnel and training bureaus.

Timing of the evaluation conference is important; in other words, an evaluation conference on the day before the staff member leaves for vacation would not seem a very good idea. There may be need for more than one conference with the same worker and their scheduling should allow the staff member time for recourse and further discussion, for clarification, after the written evaluation has been read.

A similar process of review of factors influencing the situation should be used in preparing for staff evaluation; review in relation to a full-time staff member will need to be particularly searching about the impact on performance of the agency's administrative requirements. Undue pressures due to overload should be given careful consideration; and supervisory failure to provide for careful job assignment, in relation to time requirements, must be seen objectively as a factor of supervisory accountability.

The Conference, Itself

No rigid procedures can or should be suggested for the conduct of this conference. The particular genius needed is to make it natural. Essential elements here are simplicity, clarity, and directness. The writer recalls, vividly, an incident in the lobby of an agency where she waited for an appointment; a young staff member was pacing nervously between elevator and front desk, glancing every now and then at a closed door on the far side; when the door opened, she hurried to meet a fellow staff member coming out, and asked in an anxiously loud whisper: "How was it? What did she say? Is it a 'good' evaluation?" The puzzled look on her companion's face, and the hesitating response, "I hope I'm all right, but I really don't know. She didn't

say I was or wasn't," testified to another evaluation that had missed the mark.

As suggested earlier, it is important not to introduce completely new material into an evaluation conference; content should be kept related to matters that have been worked on; there should be a genuine, not fulsome, accreditation of strengths; this will help to keep ground under the learner's feet while helping him to see the need to make changes. "If I could do that, I can do this," may help enormously to rally energies to tackle what lies ahead. There may be a need to break a problem situation into its parts; it is frequently the total complex that can be so threatening.

Attitudes That May Get in the Way

Questions supervisors and workers ask about evaluation usually indicate some feelings of anxiety about it. However positive the approach, some anxiety is normal; for reasons discussed earlier there is inevitably some threat to the person whose work is being evaluated. For the supervisor there is usually some anxiety about the responsibility it entails, sometimes fear of inadequacy in facing it, and sometimes actual distaste for this part of the supervisory job.

It will be important to try to understand what may make it difficult for us to evaluate the performance of other workers.

We may be in trouble because we have not come to terms with the professional necessity to work through others; the picture of the work to be done has usually been developed through doing the job oneself, and the view as to how it should be done inevitably influenced by that fact; we may know, intellectually, that the performance of a less experienced worker ought not to be measured against that

standard, but how does one know what the standard should be? There is always some danger that we try to create workers in our own image, with easy rationalizations that it is good for the group or the agency, when, actually, what may be operating is difficulty in relinquishing the satisfactions experienced in direct practice with groups before there has been opportunity to experience very fully the rewarding satisfactions that can come from helping others to acquire competence.

There is the possibility of a competitive factor in the situation, which may make it easier to pick out weaknesses than strengths, or some status drives that may make us a bit over "eager-beaverish" in finding places to help a young assistant; it will always help to bear in mind that the learner-worker probably has enough problems to keep him busy without piling too many new discoveries on him. The constant focus should be on helping him to identify his strengths as a basis on which he can go to work on the weaker spots.

Reluctance to bring criticism may become more pervasive when there is lack of real liking for the worker, at the same time that overemphasis on accomplishment and underplaying of weaknesses may creep into evaluation of workers who appeal personally; too many "near geniuses," not held to prevailing standards of administrative requirements, continue blithely and irresponsibly to be late with records and reports, to forget to sign "in" and "out," to fail to keep important appointments, and to mess up their petty cash.

Guilt over what has not been done to help, preoccupation with self-evaluation, and difficulties with a slipping self-image, will make it difficult to keep the focus where it belongs: on honest evaluation of the learner's progress.

A worker's response of denial to any negative findings

may bring shock and find the supervisor unready to deal with anger or withdrawal or the smiling belittling of everything that has been said; actually there is deep need for help here that will call for the utmost in sensitivity and skill on the part of the supervisor. It is a logical professional expectation that a staff member will show some capacity for self-evaluation and open-mindedness in face of criticism and we should work hard to help develop this capacity; but perhaps, in the process of evaluation, it will be well to remind ourselves that this does not carry with it certainty that people will necessarily like criticism or be able to take it comfortably.

There has been an intent, here, to emphasize the importance of the mood in which the supervisor approaches responsibilities for evaluation; there will always be need for a bit of anticipation and discipline, to uncover any lurking feelings of irritation or disappointment over nonperformance or of any tendency to overidentification with the worker.

It is only as ability to deal with one's own feelings in the situation is developed that there will be freedom to understand and meet constructively the feelings of the other person; only so, too, will one be able to give oneself the green light to be direct and clear.

The authority factor is well out in the open, here, bringing with it basic questions about the selection of people to be supervisors; there are always hazards present in being in authority: Who can assume it? Whom will it frighten? Who may misuse it?

In summary, then, evaluation is to be seen as within the teaching as well as the administrative function of supervision.

As part of the teaching process it is continuous and provides a basis for determining what the worker needs in

direct teaching and in opportunities for learning on his own.

Evaluation, to be sound and honest, must be of actual performance in the doing of a job whose content and requirements are established and known.

The worker, where written evaluations are prescribed, should see the final draft, and there should be opportunity for expression of difference of opinion; the supervisor, however, has the right and the responsibility to maintain a position which can be supported.

Notes, not a final draft, should be used in the conference; there is an art to be cultivated in writing to word things for both supervisor and worker.

To keep it relaxed is to keep it natural.

Fern Lowry [1] described the successful supervisor as "a stable secure individual, free from the need to impose his drives on others . . . flexible enough to share responsibilities with others, tolerant enough to accept their foibles, wise enough to see their strengths."

There are no better thoughts with which to approach this demanding responsibility.

[1] Fern Lowry, "A Philosophy of Supervision in Social Casework," *Proceedings,* National Conference of Social Work (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1936).

CHAPTER 12

The Supervisor a Learner, Too

Ancora imparo, "Still I am learning" (said to have been a favorite saying of Michelangelo).

Because his stance is, in a very special sense, where theory and practice meet, the supervisor—under the constant necessity of being prepared to share knowledge, teach concept and skill, communicate underlying values and principles, and help learning workers to use them in real situations—has a rich opportunity of finding new and deeper meanings in these basic areas. Integrated for his own use, new insights give fresh impetus to efforts to increase his ability as a teacher: the "good" supervisor is unquestionably and continuously a learner.

There has been an attempt in this book to indicate some of the important areas for this "continuous learning" in the art of supervision.

There remains, in the thinking of the writer, a need to point up an area of concern—broader in scope than that of the supervisory relationship with a given learning worker, but none the less squarely within the supervisor's educational responsibility to the agency as a whole.

It has to do with the impact on all aspects of professional practice in the agency of the serious shortage of professionally trained workers with special preparation in group work.

The familiar, current pattern in the group service agencies of placing staff from this very limited supply of trained personnel in supervisory and administrative jobs, and barely at all in direct practice with groups, is raising baffling questions.

Serious threat to the further development of group work as a method in social work, is seen in this lack of opportunity for trained staff, through direct practice, to consolidate learnings gained in professional school, to test concepts against rapidly developing new areas of knowledge—particularly in the social sciences—to make professional use of the process in different kinds of groups, presenting different kinds of need, to extend services to groups now untouched by the agency, and to sharpen existing tools and forge new ones for use in new situations.

To the most pessimistic it seems that under these conditions, group work must dry up at its source, and even the more sanguine fear that unless the situation changes, professional group work practice cannot advance beyond a general, rather dead level, wide of the mark of its potential development.

There would seem to be important implications, in this

situation, for supervision and supervisors in the group service agency.

In professional terms, the supervisor's area of teaching is not theory alone: he is teaching practice, and theory, tested in practice. Logically it would follow that the limited number of supervisory jobs should be filled by professionally trained people, with substantial experience of direct practice, before becoming supervisors; steady increase in numbers of trained group workers, in direct practice, would give more assurance, than now is felt, of continued availability of supervisors, adequately equipped through direct practice for the demands of the job.

At the risk of being charged with naïveté, is it not conceivable, further, that the effort to stay equipped, to add to professional knowledge, and to increase ability for teaching, might be helped by continuing in direct practice with, at least, one group of clientele?

The jobs of the group worker in direct practice and the supervisor of practice should be held in close association; in our zeal to have more group workers "doing group work" we must be careful, under the over-all pressure of trained personnel shortages, not to seem to set one job over against the other, but to work, rather, in every way possible, to correct the present imbalance. Supervisors have both an opportunity and an obligation, inherent in their educational role, to work directly to this end.

In his provocative paper on "Social Group Work in Group Service Agencies," Raymond Fisher raises the question as to "whether group service agencies can afford *not* to offer direct practice if they want both to attract and to hold professional persons." [1]

[1] In *Social Work with Groups* (New York: National Association of Social Workers, 1959), p. 28.

Supervisors are in a strategic position, in the agency, to encourage thoughtful consideration of this situation.

In his administrative role, the supervisor deals directly and quite centrally, in the agency, with questions of intake policy, the nature of services to be extended, and points of urgent community and group need that may call for modification of program and shifts in group leadership. Decisions in relation to such questions will determine the extent to which professional competence is to be utilized; the question of financing adequate staff is involved; is this too easily accepted as an insurmountable hurdle? There is increasing evidence of community readiness to support professional level services when need is clearly presented. The supervisor's knowledge is of paramount importance here, and ability to interpret and give guidance to the study of the practice situation is very closely related to the ability he is constantly seeking to develop as a teacher.

As a supervisor, he may well be in the position, from time to time, of being a port of entry to the profession, as he encourages well-qualified, untrained beginners on the staff, or a part-time worker of proved ability and interest, to seek professional education. There is an opportunity, too, for stimulating agency interest in investment in scholarship help; these are essentially practical activities, but well within the educational orientation of his job, and of a piece with his own professional goals as an educator.

Mr. Fisher reminds us in his paper,[2] that "the origins of social group work are rooted in the group service agencies. Much of the program offered in these agencies," he says, "has consisted of work with groups, *and because of the agencies' wish for better equipped staff many of them played a leading role in creating this specialization*" (writer's italics). It may well be that the supervisor's greatest

[2] Raymond Fisher, *ibid.*

opportunity for professional growth and continued learning, in these times, could come with the giving of leadership, consciously and actively, on this broader stage, to the end of a renewal of concern for increasing the scope of professional-level practice in the very agencies, who were, themselves, so closely identified with the beginnings of group work, with its formulations of objectives and the establishment of its basic methodology.

Someone has said that the professional attitude involves caring about one's work in a responsible way. The supervisor will not need to doff his educator hat to move into this area of caring about his work responsibly. Eduard C. Lindeman said, "Education is a method for giving situations a setting, for analyzing complex wholes into manageable, understandable parts, and a method which points out the path of action which, if followed, will bring the circumstance within the area of experiment." [3] Following the same line of thought, John Dewey put it this way: "The trained mind is one that best grasps the degree of observation, forming of ideas, reasoning and experimental testing required in any special case, and that profits the most, in future thinking, by mistakes made in the past. What is important is that the mind should be sensitive to problems and skilled in methods of attack and solution." [4]

[3] Eduard C. Lindeman, *The Meaning of Adult Education* (New York: New Republic Press, 1926), p. 180.

[4] John Dewey, *How We Think* (New York: D. C. Heath and Co., 1933). Page 78 in 1910 edition.

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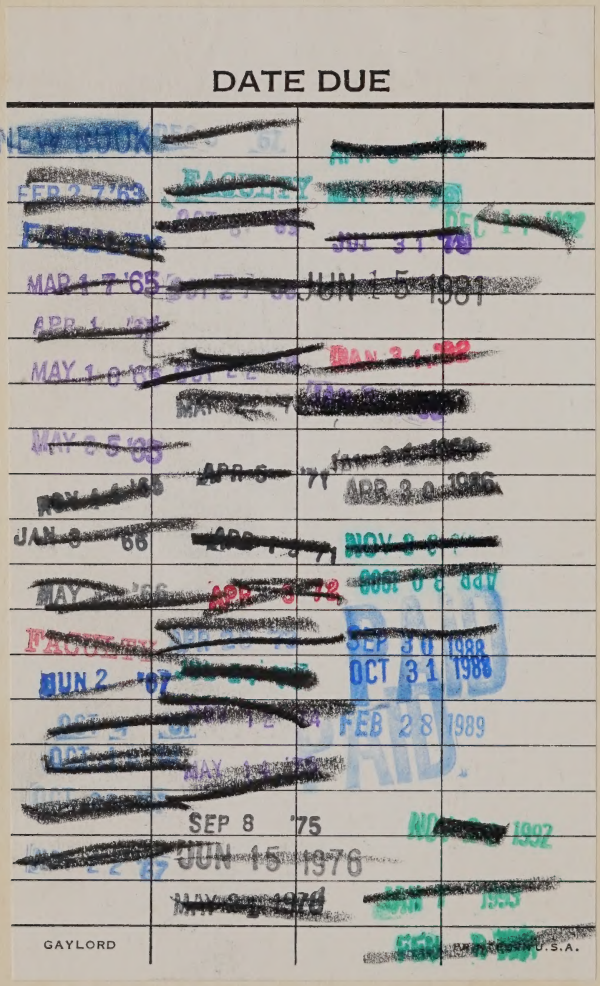
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